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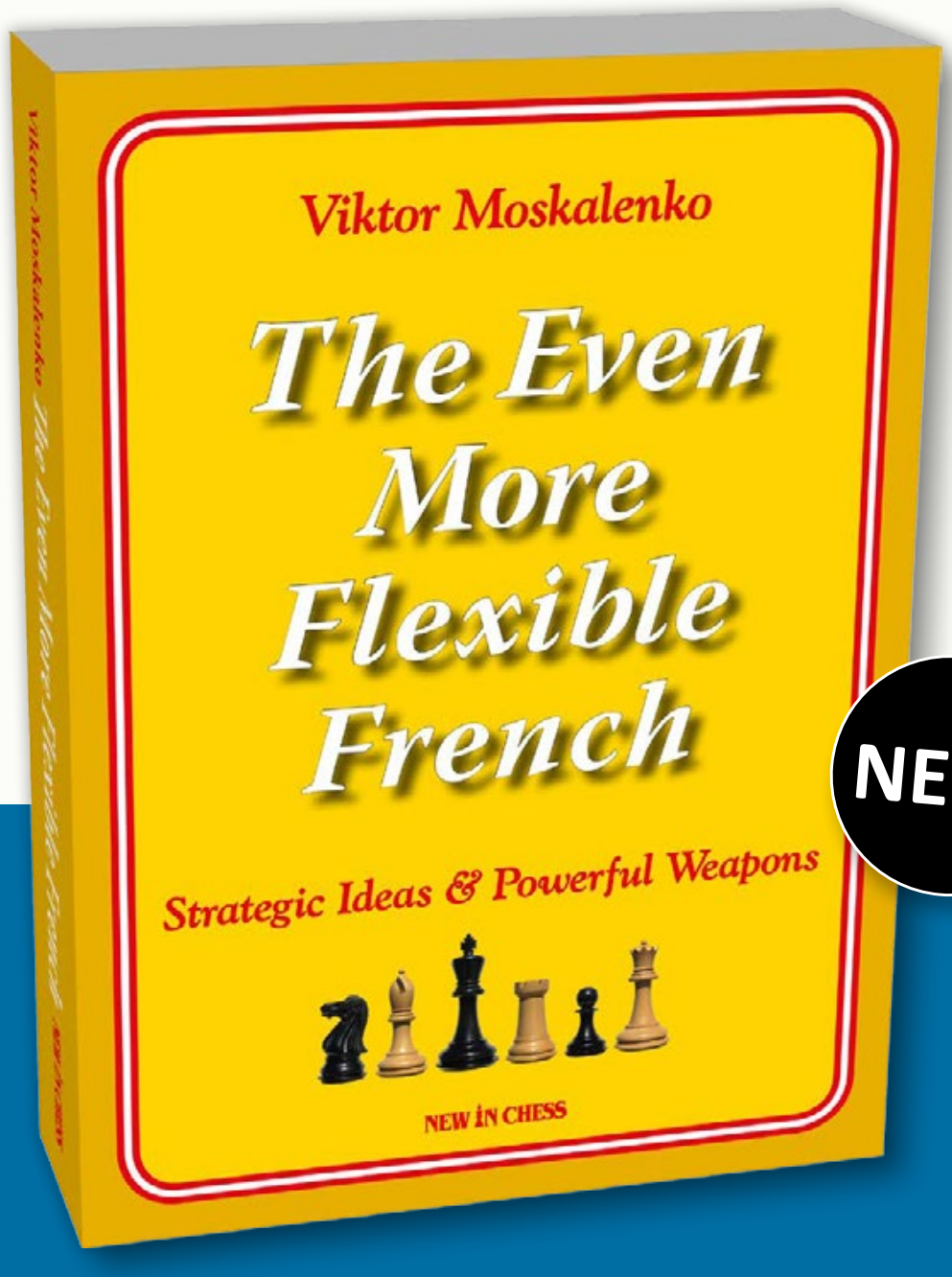
BOBBY FISCHER:
FACING HIS DARK SIDE

ISBN 978-90-5691-577-3

Seven years ago, Viktor Moskalenko caused a sensation ...



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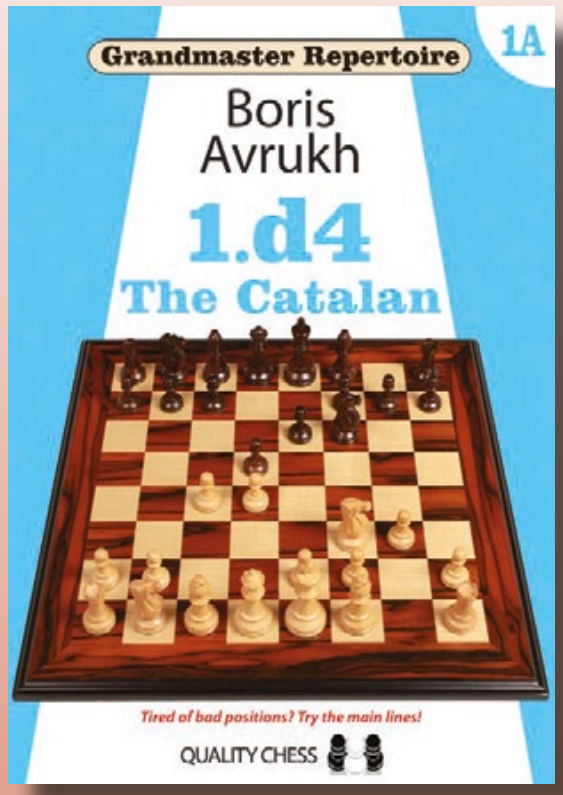

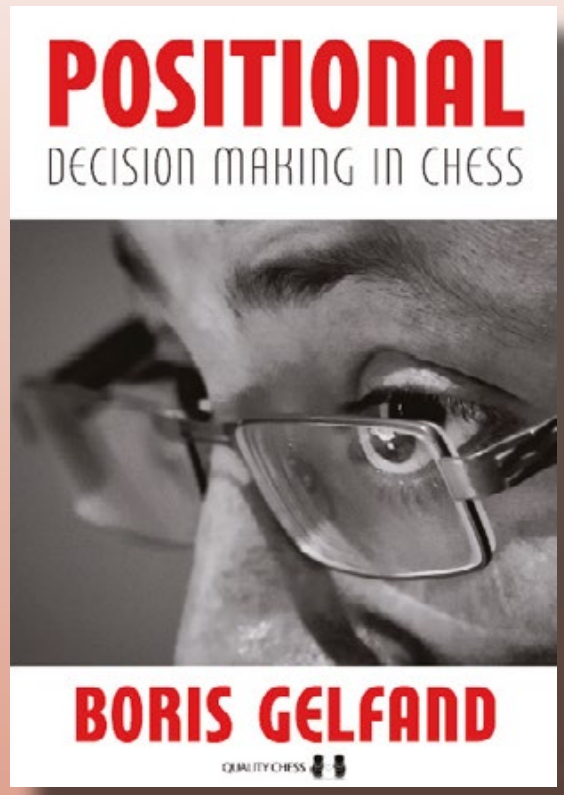

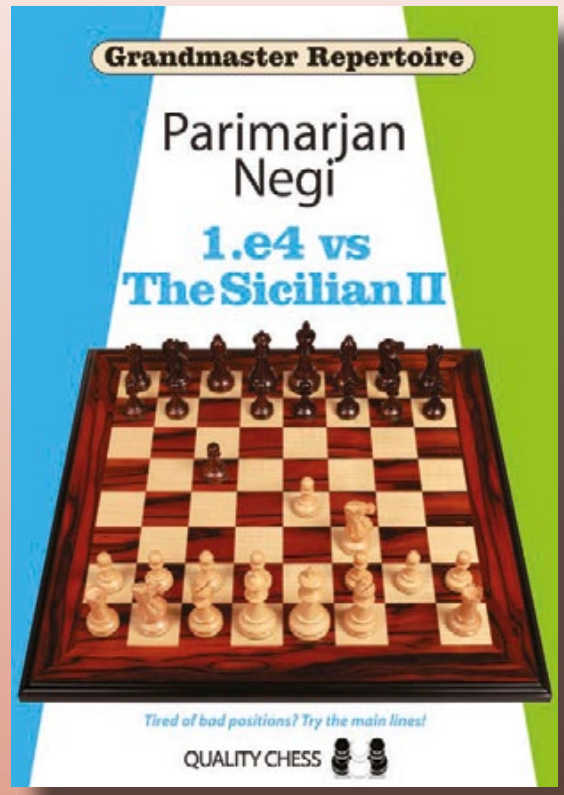

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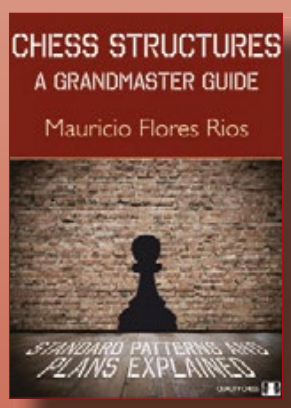
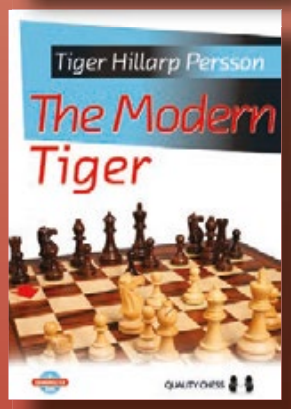


"Mauricio Flores Rios has made a welcome and important addition to the literature... It seems that a lot of thought went into the pedagogical makeup of the book, and that effort has paid off grandly. This is among the best non-beginner works for learning chess that I've seen... Here's hoping that this is not the last book we see from this young Grandmaster!" **– John Hartmann**



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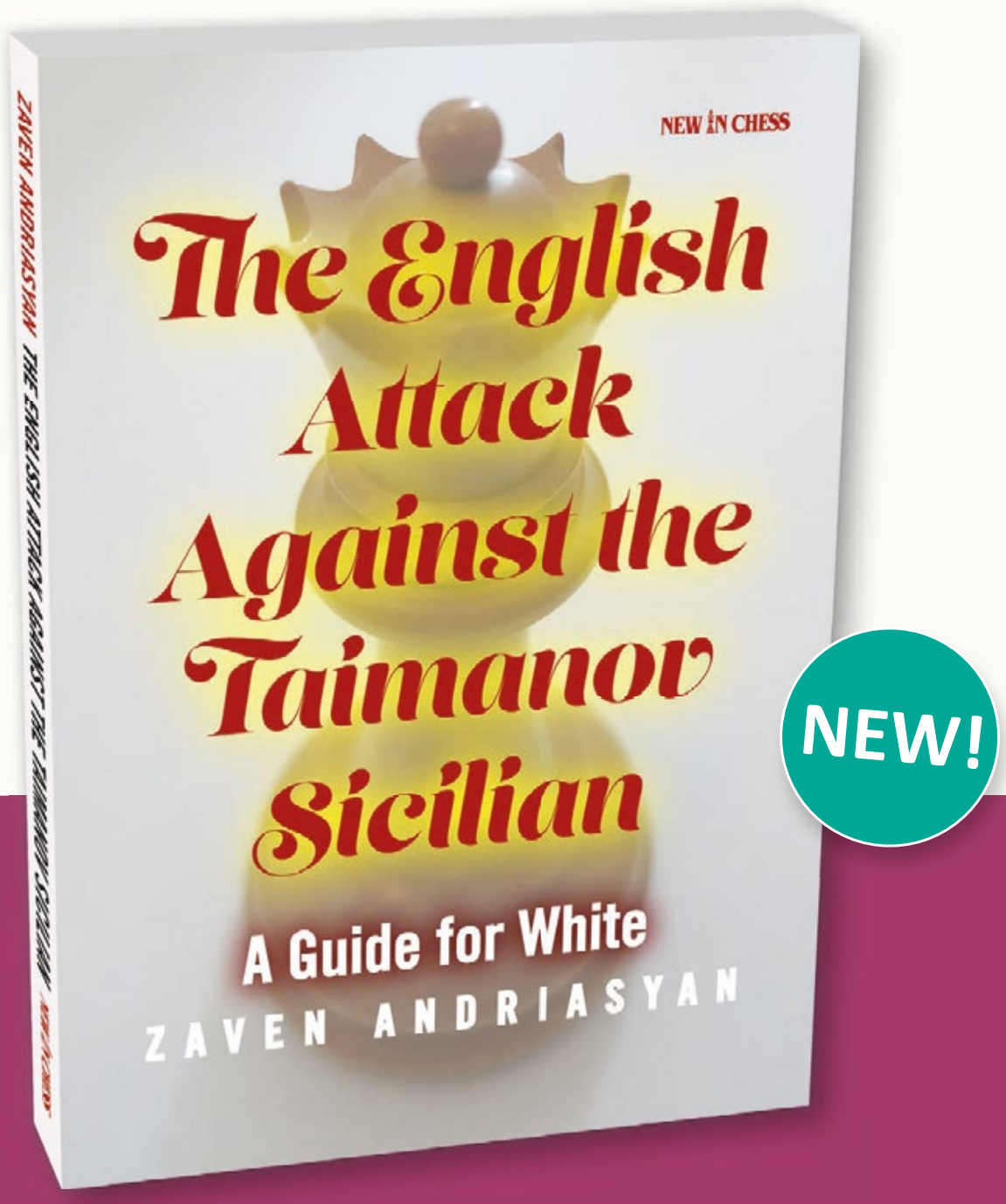
An easy-to-grasp and dangerous weapon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The English Attack Against the Taimanov Sicilian
A Guide for White
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ZAVEN ANDRIASYAN THE ENGLISH ATTACK AGAINST THE TAIMANOV SICILIAN
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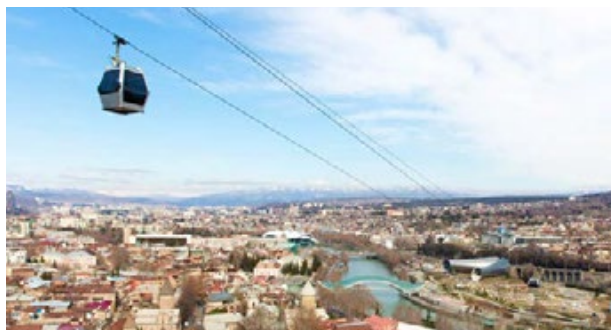

'In fact I simply picked up my king, not wanting to be mated in one move ☺'
Denis Khismatullin

(on how he found the stunning 44.♔g1!! against Pavel Eljanov at the European Championship)

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Read their Minds

A friend wondered which New In Chess articles I enjoy most myself. A fairly impossible question. Still, it set me thinking and I'd like to single out a part that my friend may not have had in mind.

At the core of each issue are carefully selected games annotated by top players – master classes in plain language, full of humour and psychological insight that allow us to read their minds. I must say that the clarity and originality of those notes keep amazing me. Chess will never be an easy game (fortunately!), but going over those games will inevitably improve the understanding of club players of any level.

'Master classes in plain language, full of humour and psychological insight.'

■ In this issue, don't miss Evgeny Tomashevsky's analysis – two gripping short stories, in fact – or the comments of our own Anish Giri, crisp and clear as always. Or any of the other contributors.

■ For example, Erwin l'Ami, unstoppable in Reykjavik. In a personal account, the affable Dutch GM calls his win a 'once-in-a-lifetime' result. Come on, Erwin, you're only 30!

■ China and India are the new chess powerhouses. Magnus Carlsen believes that ultimately the Indians will call the shots. Have a look what young Indian ace Adhiban Baskaran has to say about the India-China summit in Hyderabad.

■ Denis Khismatullin's ♔g1!! looks a hard-to-beat candidate for The Move of the Year. Jan Timman pays tribute with a study and Denis himself explains how he found this stunner.

■ And how do you resign a game? Genna Sosonko did research and not all options are recommended.

■ Not to be missed either: our columnists. Nigel Short writes about rapscallions and, in particular, curmudgeons. Matthew Sadler compares watching an opening DVD on the couch to reading a book on the train. Parimarjan Negi teaches you how to swindle. And Hans Ree lauds Kasparov's oratory skills, but begs to differ as regards his political views.

And there is Bobby Fischer, whom many chess lovers have begun to shun. Don't. Separate the person from the chess genius. Admit that he was mentally ill, accept that he cannot be blamed for this, and enjoy his unique talent for our game.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam,
Editor in Chief

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Boxing Clever

'Chess and boxing seems as bizarre as anything, but they do have something in common', wrote author and journalist David Edmonds after attending a chess-boxing gala. 'One is a duel characterized by cruelty, ruthlessness and violence. And boxing is much the same.'

Yet the very idea that boxers might play chess strikes many people as incongruous. But former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis liked nothing more than to be hunched over the chess board. And also there's the chess-playing Klitschko brothers, Vitali and Wladimir, the current heavyweight champion.

The latest pugilist with a passion for the 64 squares is Filipino Manny Pacquiao, who is set to take part in the biggest boxing bout in history (expected to generate a mind-boggling $ 300 million) on May 2 in Las Vegas – and chess is his secret weapon ahead of his superfight against Floyd Mayweather. Manny, 5-times world champion, has a chess board in all his training camps and uses it as part of his mental relaxation – and he has taken lessons from another favourite Filipino son: GM Eugene Torre!

Pacquiao not only plays chess, he also greatly supports it in his homeland. In 2013 he sponsored the Asian Continental Chess Championship with a prize fund of $100,000, the winner also receiving the 'Manny Pacquiao Chess Cup'. And it was a Swiss tournament, not a knockout.

CONG. MANNY PACQUIAO
WORLD CHAMPION
PHI

Noah Way!

Who doesn't know of *The Daily Show*, the go-to place for satire on global news, hosted by the irrepressible Jon Stewart, who earlier this year announced that he would be leaving the popular show after his 16-year stint at the helm. The big surprise was last month's announcement that Trevor Noah, 31, a black South African stand-up, is set to be Stewart's unlikely replacement in the hot seat.

Chess on *The Daily Show*: 'The United States is buying up nerds, nerd mercenaries!'

Wait, who? No way! Yes, this is a massive career boost for the relatively unknown comedian, who appeared only three times on the show since being hired last December as its new international correspondent. Noah's third appearance was the funniest by far, and on chess – and in particular the efforts being made in the U.S. to 'buy up' all of the world's chess talents, as they strive to build the ultimate dream team for Olympiad gold next year in Baku.

'That's right,' cried an over-excited Stewart, 'the United States is buying up nerds, nerd mercenaries!' He was referring to *The New York Times* giving prominence in a front-page splash recently by Dylan Loeb McClain of supposedly secret deals to 'persuade' top grandmasters to switch allegiance to the Stars and Stripes. 'Scoop' McClain noted that Manila-born Wesley So had recently made the move to the U.S., and speculated that next it could well be a 'welcome home' for Italy's Miami-born Fabiano Caruana – and all this apparently being bankrolled by St. Louis billionaire chess patron Rex Sinquefield. However, Caruana is on the record as turning down 'for now' a large wodge of cash to switch.

The United States Chess Federation has already set up a player opportunity committee and a charitable fund to help recruit foreign players interested in moving to the United States, in an all-out effort to raise the game's popularity in the Land of the Fee – sorry, Free. 'Certainly,' said USCF executive board member Randy Bauer, 'if we have a team that wins a gold medal against Russia and China, that will help. The United States loves winners.'

All of this proved irresistible knock-about material for *The Daily Show*, with every negative chess cliché you could imagine – chess players as nerds, chess as boring, chess as only 'kind of" a sport, and the inevitable opening gambit from Noah, of 'All right, because I'm white, I'll go first' – as Stewart and Noah (and naturally, with the chessboard between the jovial jesters having the king and queen on the wrong squares!) made a mockery of our game during their lively back-and-forth.

Jon Stewart feels it coming. Trevor Noah: 'All right, because I'm white, I'll go first.'

The Dark Horse

The New Zealand movie industry is not all about Peter Jackson and the spectacular vistas used in the film director's native homeland for the stunning backdrops to his *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies. Those in the know, such as the Café's film critic, will tell you of *Whale Rider*, the superb Maori-themed indie hit-movie of 2002. One of the co-stars in that cult movie, Cliff Curtis, is back again to take top billing in yet another impressive Maori-themed movie *The Dark Horse*, which recently had its premiere at the Glasgow International Film Festival ahead of a European-wide release in April. It's based on the true tale of Genesis Pontini (Curtis), a homeless bipolar former Maori chess champion who ended up helping at-risk youngsters avoid gang life and the inevitable alcohol and drug culture associated with it.

But be warned that this inspirational movie deals in realism with no Disney feel-good factor to it. It's a very gritty, raw and uncompromising drama about contemporary Maori culture, with chess becoming the perfect metaphor to negotiate the battlefield of life that Curtis's character strives throughout to teach his students about.

Sure, it's a little gem of a movie. But being pedantic, our critic soon found fault with the main chess scenes – it certainly could have done with hiring Murray Chandler as its technical director! Granted, all the chess-scenes had the boards the right way round and the pieces in the right place – but one main scene had Genesis at his demo board instructing the kids that, in the opening, when the white bishop goes to c4 it was 'the Spanish square', and when it went to b5 this was 'the Italian square'.

But the worst was saved for last, with the climactic chess scene seeing the kids getting their dream trip to the New Zealand Junior Championship, where one of Pontini's star students inevitably does battle for the main title. So, can you tell us how, as Black in a standard Two Knights Defence, you go two pieces down for no compensation after only eight moves, yet a few minutes later everyone is celebrating his win?

***The Dark Horse*: no Disney feel-good factor.**

Sure enough, when the credits rolled, our man at the movies overheard the telling comment from another film critic: 'I don't know much about chess myself, but I gather it's pretty much over and done with when you go two bits down like that in the opening.'

The Geopolitical Chessboard

Political analysts often use chess as a metaphor to describe world affairs. How many times have you heard chess phrases in the media to represent wars, battle of wits, and political fights, such as: 'The negotiations ended in stalemate', 'the political situation is reaching its endgame', 'pawns in a political game', or perhaps even 'the geopolitical chessboard'?

That last metaphor took on an added dimension recently, as a roller-coaster eight-days of tough

A member of the Iranian media on the 'geopolitical' chessboard.

negotiations took place in Switzerland between world powers over Iran's nuclear programme at Lausanne's famous Beau-Rivage Palace hotel, which played host to the summit. The negotiations were led by John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, and six other foreign ministers. There were marathon runs of meetings, sometimes lasting through the night, and then the breakthrough of finally thrashing out a deal. In the end, when it was all over, Kerry said 'It was tough, very intense at times, sometimes emotional and confrontational.'

But at least through it all, the negotiating teams and the assembled mass media had the idyllic setting of the five-star hotel with its beautifully maintained grounds – in which there was also the strategically placed and much-photographed giant chess set and board that cunningly served as an artful analogy for the game of nuclear chess that was going on inside.

One poignant photo showed a member of the Iranian media, perhaps in sombre reflection of what was happening inside, as she walked across the chessboard – a now famous chessboard that became a visual symbol of the 'geopolitical chessboard'.

Legals Mate

There's a running joke in America that the favourite Country & Western singer of all lawyers is Johnny Cash, not just because of his name but also because he had a global No. 1 hit with *A Boy Named Sue*. And it's claimed in the United States that they have 30 times more lawsuits per person than anywhere else in the world.

Clearly, the U.S. is experiencing a lawsuit epidemic. Filing a lawsuit has become a common occurrence and filing a frivolous lawsuit has become the punch line to a sitcom plot. There was even the case of the surfer who sued another surfer for stealing his wave. But what about this one?

It involves the Utah-based Strategic Planning Group, which claims that after it developed a 'unique and readily identifiable' logo in 1999 that featured a knight chess piece centred above the company name, another Utah firm started using a nearly identical logo to cause confusion in their market area.

The logo for Peterson Wealth Services also includes a knight chess

Two logos, two knights: Impossible to keep apart.

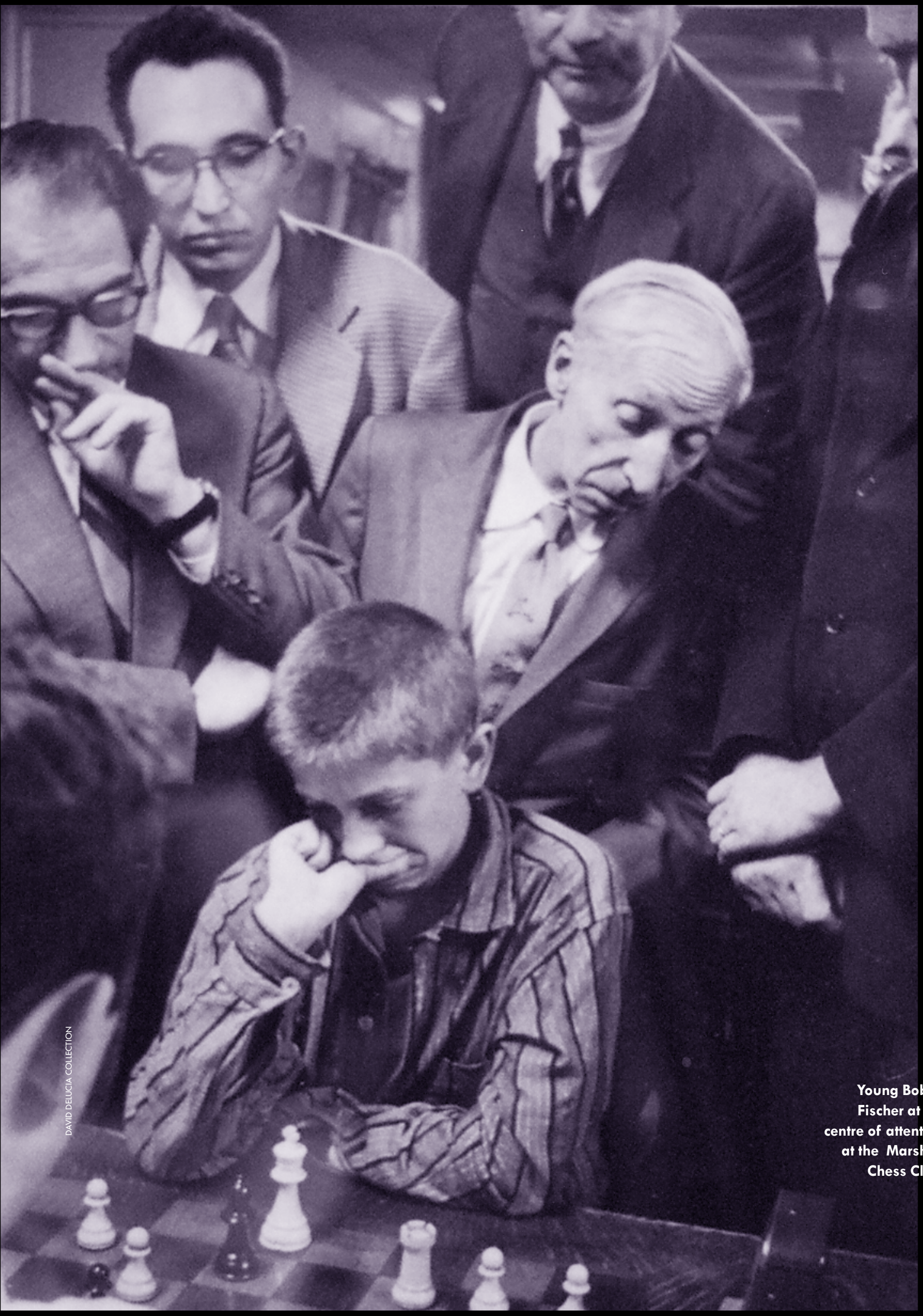
piece centred above the firm's name. What's more, Strategic Planning claim in court papers, Peterson's website has – shock, horror – a photo of a chessboard next to the phrase 'The Strategic Side of Retirement Planning'. The firm claims that they have copyright over the chess piece logo, and that Peterson Wealth Services copied its mark and used a chessboard and the word 'strategic' in close proximity 'to confuse consumers and to gain business at the expense of Strategic.'

There's probably no truth in the unsubstantiated rumours that FIDE are following the case very closely indeed, as it could well be yet another frivolous new way to generate even more cash from federations and chess clubs. After all, just think how many use similar-styled logos with chess pieces on them? It could just all become a different kind of Légal's mate from now on. ■

Facing Bobby Fischer

Coming to terms with the American champion's mental illness is the only way to unreservedly enjoy his chess brilliance

'American society, and maybe all civilized societies, seem to have a hard time separating the genius from the individual or the artist from the art,' writes Alessandra DeLucia in the epilogue to **Bobby Fischer, Triumph and Despair**, an unsettling collection of letters, diaries and private notes from the Fischer library of her father David DeLucia. Besides memories of Fischer's greatest feats, the book contains a harrowing amount of evidence of an inconvenient truth: that the 11th World Champion was mentally ill for the better part of his life. Even to this day, many Fischer fans and people that had known him personally are looking for ways to excuse his outrageous behaviour or gloss over his dark side. **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** argues that in doing so, they have been doing Bobby Fischer a great disservice. Only by accepting his illness as a fact can we forgive his virulent anti-Semitism, his raving paranoia and other delusions, and embrace the chess genius, one of the greatest and most inspiring champions our game has ever seen.



DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

Young Bobby Fischer at the centre of attention at the Marshall Chess Club.

As I am staring at the big tome that sits on my desk next to the computer I am typing on, I try to decide which were the most distressing fragments that I had read in the 786 pages of *Bobby Fischer, Triumph and Despair*. It's a confusing challenge. There are way too many. The early part of the book starts off innocently enough, providing all the nostalgia you can hope for. There's a wonderful photo of young Bobby playing at the Manhattan Chess Club with senior members standing behind him stretching their necks to catch a glimpse of his game. Or the score sheet of his brilliant win against Donald Byrne in 1956, which was immediately labelled the 'Game of the Century'. Or the cover of *Chess Life* celebrating his perfect score (11-0!) at the 1963 US Championship, adorned with his autograph, as are countless other items in the book.

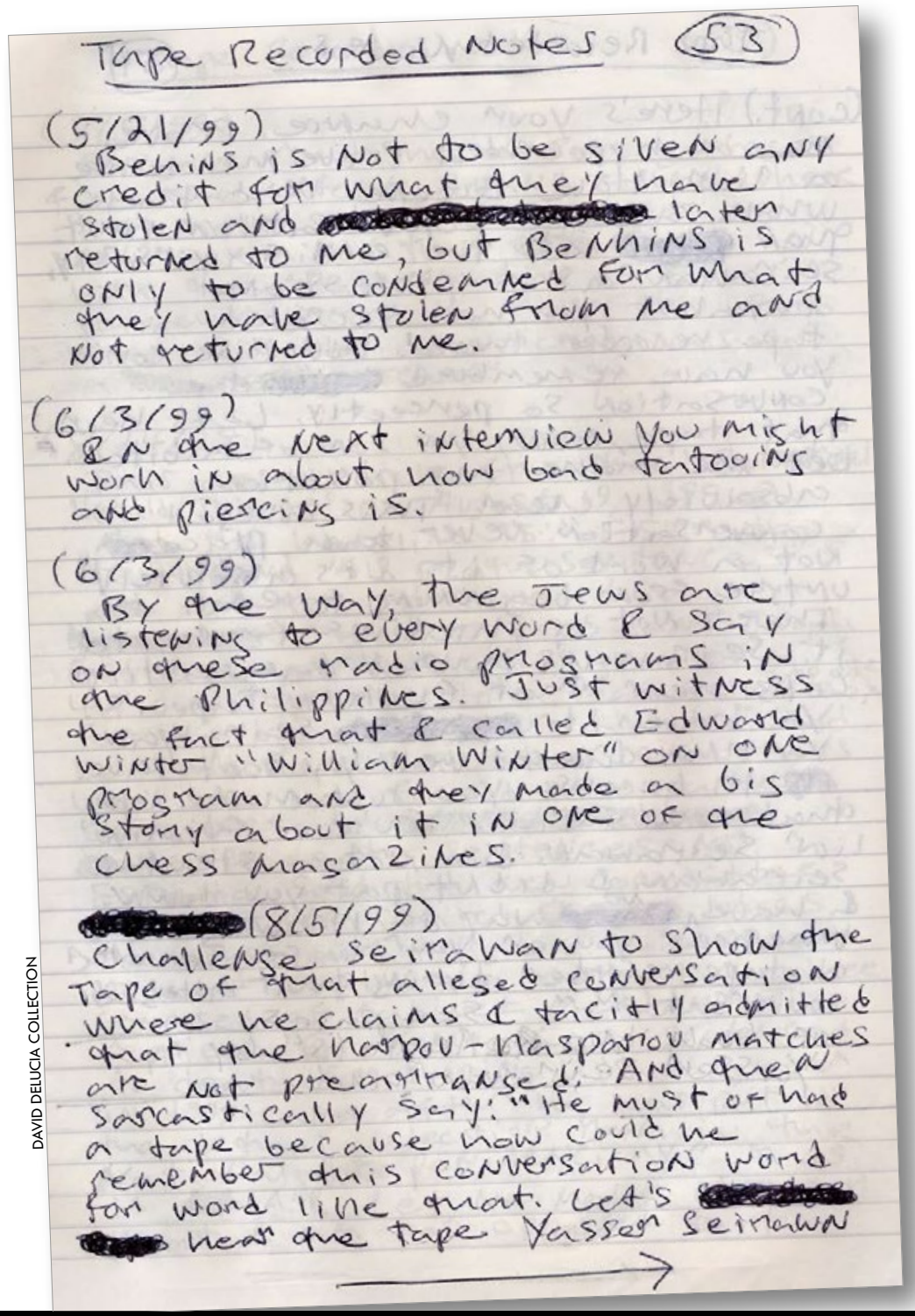
But soon small clouds begin to gather. On page 113, next to a postcard from the 1970 Olympiad in Siegen, signed by Fischer, Euwe, Spassky, Petrosian and others, you read Boris Spassky's impressions about Fischer as he expressed them on his return to Moscow: 'By character Fischer is spontaneous and proud. He says what he thinks. But such people find it hard to live in modern society, and it seems to me that Fischer is very lonely. This is one of his tragedies.'

By that time you've also seen the letter that Fischer wrote to the organizing committee of the 1962 Candidates' tournament in Curaçao asking for Pal Benkö to be 'fined and/or expelled from the tournament', as his compatriot had hit him. Benkö did so in a dispute over Arthur Bisguier, who was Fischer's official second, but who didn't mind working for Benkö as well, an idea Fischer was opposed to. Many years later Benkö told David DeLucia that slapping Fischer was one of the biggest regrets in his life, 'Because I knew he wasn't well, he wasn't right. He was a sick person even then and I knew it.'

Fischer's sickness shows in a mass of documents that constitute the bulk of the book. Many of them are difficult to get out of your mind once you've read them. In a letter to Svetozar Gligoric, one of his most loyal friends, he instructs him as to how the Yugoslav organizers who were trying to stage a match between him and Anatoly Karpov in 1975, should address him. Here goes:

'Fischer; The world chess champion.
The real world chess champion.
The people's world chess champion.
The rightful world chess champion.
The undefeated world chess champion.
The reining [sic] world chess champion.
The present world chess champion.
The current world chess champion.
The true chess world champion.
The only chess world champion.
The genuine chess world champion.'

There's not a tinge of irony and he's not joking either when he tells 'Gliga'



Tape Recorded Notes (53)

(5/21/99)
Behins is Not to be siven any credit for what they have stolen and [redacted] later returned to me, but BeNhins is only to be condemned for what they have stolen from me and Not returned to me.

(6/3/99)
&N the next interview you might work in about how bad tatooing and piercing is.

(6/3/99)
By the way, the Jews are listening to every word & say on these radio programs in the Philippines. Just witness the fact that & called Edward Winter "William Winter" on one program and they made a big story about it in one of the chess magazines.

[redacted] (8/5/99)
Challenge Seirawan to show the Tape of that allesed conversation where he claims & tacitly admitted that the Karpov-Kasparov matches are not prearranged. And then sarcastically say: "He must of had a tape because how could he remember this conversation word for word like that. Let's [redacted] hear the tape Yasser Seirawn

DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

Fischer's Tape Recorded Notes: Hundreds of pages with observations and comments that he first taped and then wrote out, carefully indicating the dates when these thoughts came to him.

how Karpov should be referred to: The so called FIDE 'world chess champion'. The Bankers 'chess world champion'. The impositor [sic] 'world chess champion'. The phoney 'world chess champion.' Etc.

Actually, this repetitive enumeration is one of the shorter ones between his many Tourette-like eruptions. Among his 'tape recorded notes' (hundreds of pages with observations and comments that he first taped and then wrote out, carefully indicating the dates when these thoughts came to him) there is a 39-page notebook ominously entitled 'The Holocaust is a lot of shit and other facts', which starts off with: 'Jews are terrible people. Jews are no good. "Bless that anti-semitic bastard Fischer."' And more of the same for pages on end. Just imagine how deluded you must be if you first tape-record these thoughts and then sit down to put them into writing, making no bones about writing down some thoughts six times in a row for the simple reason that you also said them six times when you recorded them.

In fact, this prolonged rant reminded me of the finest chapter in Helgi Olafsson's *Bobby Fischer Comes Home*, in which Olafsson describes a fishing trip in Iceland with a couple of friends and Fischer. The atmosphere is jovial and relaxed, and there are warm moments when songs are being sung in the evening and Fischer shows his sensitive and vulnerable side. You get the feeling that returning to the songs of his youth, he seems to be longing for those days. But the chapter ends on a wry note when Olafsson wakes up the next morning: 'When I opened my eyes in the morning Bobby was already up. He was walking around the fishing hut talking to himself: "The fucking Jews, they are after me, I must get to them. The fucking Jews." And on and on. It was disturbing. Did he wake up every morning, day after day, week after week, year after year talking to himself like this?' Maybe he did.

Another disconcerting document in *Triumph and Despair*, and not only for its content, concerns the new algebraic edition of *My 60 Memorable Games* that Batsford published in 1995. The book infuriated Fischer for many reasons. With great abandon he points out all the changes that he doesn't agree with, explains how his rights were violated in this and many other cases and attacks practically anyone he can think of, rarely forgetting to mention that they are or must be Jews. His attack on Batsford is far from unfounded, as it is easy to agree with a lot of Fischer's criticism, but sadly, his reasonable points are drowned in a flood of foul language and invectives. But what is really troubling is that this document is not the only fruit of his fury about Batsford's algebraic edition, but only one draft of his attack on the publisher. This version, of 62 typed pages, is called *Attention Scotland Yard! The British Publishers B.T. Batsford Ltd Are Crooks*. A later version (100 pages), partly published in 2009 in David and Alessandra DeLucia's *Bobby Fischer Uncensored*, was called *What Can You Expect From Baby Mutilators*. For almost two years he would write a draft every few weeks, and all those drafts occupy more than a metre of shelf space in DeLucia's library.

Finding distressing documents in *Triumph and Despair* is almost a matter of opening the book at a random page, with the possible exception of the earlier part. The tone gets darker and darker as Fischer gets angrier and more desperate after the publication of the Batsford edition of *My 60 Memorable Games* and the sale, in 1999, after a missed payment, of the possessions he kept at a Bekins storage facility in Pasadena, California. On page 758 there is a draft of a letter to Osama Bin Laden ('Dear Mr. Osama Bin Laden, allow me to introduce myself. I am Bobby Fischer the World Chess Champion.') in which he first points out their shared 'hatred of the

Bobby Fischer
a short timeline

1943, March 9: Chicago: Bobby begins
1949, May: learns to play chess
1956, July: wins US Junior Championship
1956, October: 'Game of the Century' vs. Donald Byrne
1958, January: youngest winner US Championship, 14 years, 9 months
1958, August: the world's youngest grandmaster, 15 years, 6 months
1960, April: ties for first with Spassky in Mar del Plata
1961, July: abandons match with Reshevsky (5½-5½)
1962, May: accuses Soviets of cheating at Candidates' tournament Curaçao
1964, January: wins US Championship with perfect score (11-0)
1967, October: withdraws from Sousse Interzonal (in the lead, 8½/10)
1970, April: defeats Petrosian 3-1 in USSR vs. Rest of the World (Board 2)
1970, April: wins unofficial blitz world championship in Herceg Novi (19/22)
1970, November: wins Palma Mallorca Interzonal (18½/23)
1971, June: defeats Taimanov 6-0 in Candidates' quarter final
1971, July: defeats Larsen 6-0 in Candidates' semi-final
1971, September: defeats Petrosian 6½-2 ½ in Candidates' final
1972, September: World Champion, defeats Spassky 12½-8½
1975, April: forfeits his title, Karpov is the new World Champion
1992, September: emerges from 'wilderness years' to play match with Spassky in Yugoslavia. Wins 17½-12½
2004, July: is arrested and imprisoned in Japan
2005, March: receives Icelandic citizenship and is released from prison.
2008, January 17: dies in Reykjavik, Iceland

murderous bandit state of Israel' and then gets down to business: 'I would urgently like to get in touch with you regarding the recent U.S. government sanctioned mega-robbery of all my memorabilia […] which since 1986 I had kept at the Bekins Moving and Storage Company in Pasadena, California, U.S.A.'

Bobby Fischer, Triumph and Despair may not be a pleasant read, but there can be no denying that it contains a wealth of information that is historically important. That is, if you are interested in the persona of perhaps the most celebrated of the chess World Champions. And yet, since the book appeared one year ago, it has been surrounded by silence. One obvious explanation why it didn't attract widespread attention is the limited luxury edition of 155 copies that it appeared in and its steep price of 550 dollars. But that only partly explains why it was given the cold shoulder. Collectors who bought the book and that I spoke to felt uncomfortable about it, muttering that 'perhaps it was a bit much' and 'was it really necessary to publish all this?' The chess history website of Edward Winter, a platform where chess writings tend to be dissected in the greatest detail, mentioned the appearance of the book, but only 'quoted' hitherto unpublished training games between Fischer and Gligoric. In Winter's defence we may say that on an earlier occasion he did meticulously examine Fischer's objections against Batsford's new algebraic edition of *My 60 Memorable Games*, although in that case he may have been motivated by the fact that he sided with Fischer and that Raymond Keene, Winter's favourite *bête noire*, was 'General Adviser' at Batsford. It is remarkable that Winter, a historian who loves unearthing historical titbits, often fairly insignificant and from obscure sources, could not find more than a number of unpublished training games in *Triumph and Despair* to show to his readers. It is hard to come up with another reason than that he had no wish to enter the dark recesses of the mind of a man he admires so much as a chess player.

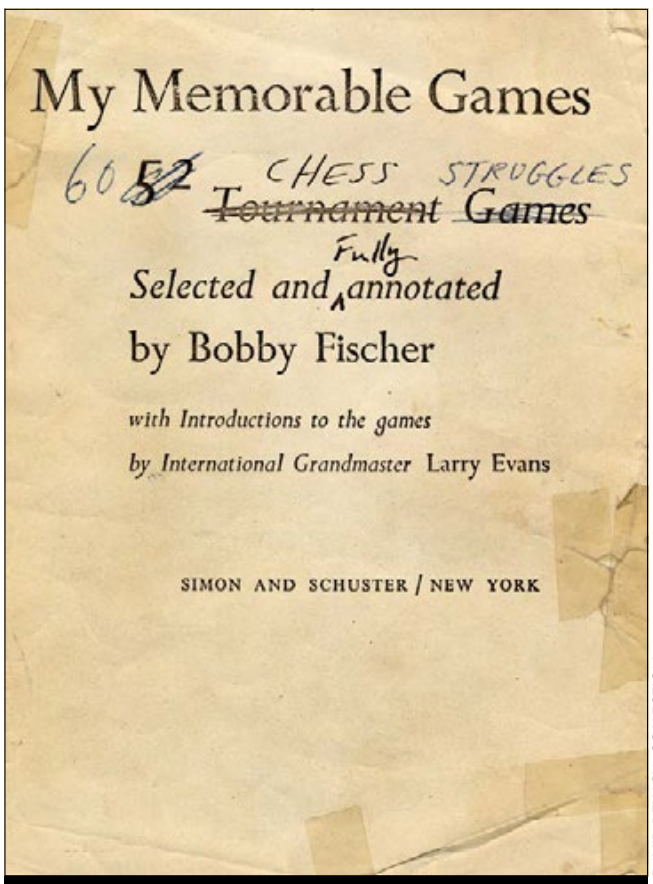
■ ■ ■

The dismissive reaction, if there was a reaction at all, to *Triumph and Despair* is reminiscent of the distrust and antipathy with which *Bobby Fischer vs. The Rest of the World* was received, the account of the Match of the Century in Reykjavik in 1972 by American journalist Brad Darrach, and perhaps the best book ever written about Fischer. Aimed at a large audience and published in the wake of the match in 1974, the book encountered a lukewarm to cold reception in chess circles. In the eyes of chess players this was clearly a journalistic attempt at selling a story on a difficult subject, chess, with a recipe that consisted of sensationalism, hyperbole and exaggeration. The chess community saw their fears confirmed by Bobby Fischer himself, who was so appalled by the book that he tried to sue Darrach and have it withdrawn – without success. But the one thing he did achieve was that for the average chess fan the book remained contaminated. For people closer to Fischer it was another story altogether. They knew they had to lambast the book or at the very least ignore it if they didn't want to be banned by him.

> 'Fischer looked into the mirror that Darrach held up to him, and who could blame him for not liking what he saw?'

Darrach didn't mince words and showed Fischer in all his egocentrism; distrusting and incriminating everyone, not caring about anyone's feelings and only thinking about himself. Fischer looked into the mirror that Darrach held up to him, and who could blame him for not liking what he saw? What must he have thought when he read a description like this one: 'Most of his facial expression are rudimentary displays of fear, hunger, anger, pleasure, pain, suspicion, interest – all the emotions a man or animal can have without feeling close to any other man or animal. I have rarely seen him register sympathy, invitation, acknowledgement, humor, tenderness, playfulness. And never love.'

I only read Darrach's book many years after its publication, when I had come to understand that Fischer was not just a difficult person living by his own rules, but a man plagued by inner demons. This made it easier for me to believe that a lot of what Darrach wrote was true. But how true? When I travelled to Reykjavik, three weeks after Fischer's death in 2008 (see New In Chess 2008/2), to speak to the people that had known him in Iceland, one of my questions was if they knew



DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

One of the most celebrated books in chess history originally had a different title.

Darrach's book and how truthful his account had been. The most startling answer I received was from Gudmundur Thorarinsson, the organizer of the match in 1972. Gudmundur estimated the book's veracity at 80 per cent. When I pointed out that this is an extremely high percentage for any book, he confirmed that that was what he wanted to say. But then again, the picture that Darrach painted was a picture that few people wanted to see.

■ ■ ■

The picture of Bobby Fischer that, despite everything, most of us continued to cling to was a totally different one. Untroubled and healthy, smart, almost carefree. To give you an idea, let me take you to St. Louis for a while, to the exhibition *A Memorable Life: A Glimpse into the Complex Mind of Bobby Fischer* that will run until June 7. On the ground floor of the World Chess Hall of Fame, before taking the stairs or the elevator to the actual exhibition on the second floor, the visitor is welcomed by a life-size portrait of the 11th Chess World Champion at the height of his powers. This is how we love to see Bobby Fischer. He's handsome, fit, well-dressed and defiant. Single-handedly he has taken on the Soviet supremacy in chess and single-handedly he is going to wrest the highest title from 'the commie cheaters'. Square-jawed and self-confident he peers into the lens of star photographer Harry Benson. They're in a park in Buenos Aires, it's 1971. One year later Bobby will dethrone Boris Spassky to fulfil his life's dream.

In what manner Fischer's mind was 'complex' is not explained in the exhibition brochure. Curators Shannon Bailey and Emily Allred write about the 'storied life of a man who was both a source of intense admiration and controversy', but do not mention any controversy that Fischer evoked. The emphasis is on the exhibits that show how he studied chess and prepared for the 1972 World Championship match. Likewise, John Donaldson's contribution to the beautiful brochure is entitled *Inside an Enigma, The Fischer Library of Dr. Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield*. But if you didn't know about Fischer already you'll be left guessing what that enigma was. With great knowledge Donaldson describes Fischer's love for chess literature and his incessant collecting. He happily focuses on highlights such as the famous 'Red Book', a German book with all of Spassky's games that Fischer always had with him while preparing for and playing the match. Donaldson does describe one of the most dramatic moments in Fischer's life, the public sale in 1998 of the books, magazines and other possessions that he kept at a Bekins storage facility in Pasadena. He writes that 'Bobby suffered a tragedy', failing to add that the impact of the tragedy was enormous. He doesn't elaborate that Fischer had always been self-centred and full of distrust about other people's motives, but that the loss of some of his most cherished possessions removed the last remnants of any inhibitions he still may have had, throwing him back into his own dark world where utter distrust, anger and hatred defined his behaviour. More than ever before Fischer grew into the eccentric former chess champion who caused 'controversy' with his unreasonable behaviour, his anti-Semitic rants and his inability to connect with the normal world.

The exhibition in St. Louis allows us to relive the Bobby Fischer dream of the uniquely talented boy from Brooklyn who became World Champion. There are the table and the upholstered chairs from the living-room of his first trainer Jack Collins, where as a kid he always got a friendly welcome. There's the Gottschall book on Adolf Anderssen, the 19th-century romantic whose games he studied so meticulously. And there is a typewritten galley of an early version of *My 60 Memorable Games*. For some reason, the following note on Mikhail Tal did not make it into the final version, and we happily make up for that omission: 'Tal has an annoying habit of writing down the move he intends to play before making it. As a consequence his scoresheet is an eyesore. He usually writes lemons down on the first draft, reserving the move he actually selects until somewhere around the

DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

After the untimely end of the Fischer-Reshevsky match, Al Bisno, former President of the Manhattan Chess Club, suggested to set aside Fischer's loser's share of $1,225 for psychiatric examination.

fourth chicken scratch. Unfortunately the temptation to glance at his scoresheet is overwhelming.' Priceless.

Still, the 'controversy' is not entirely shunned in the exhibition. In one of the display cabinets there's a letter that truly startled me. It was donated by the family of chess benefactor Jacqueline Piatigorsky, together with other documents, photographs and artefacts, and is related to the match Fischer played against Samuel Reshevsky in 1961. The first match he was involved in that made headlines in the newspapers. Scheduled to last 16 games, the match was aborted when Fischer didn't appear for the 12th game. Despite pleas from all sides he didn't agree on the earlier starting time of that game, 11 a.m., as Mrs. Piatigorsky, the sponsor and an avid player herself, wanted to see both the chess and attend a unique concert in the evening, where her husband, the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky would play together with the legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz.

'It would be premature to make too many decisions regarding the future of Fischer until more was known as to the true nature of his mental condition.'

The letter is written by Al Bisno, who in the 1950s was President of the Manhattan Chess Club, and is directed at Morris Kasper and Walter Fried, the President of the US Chess Federation. Bisno urges them not to pay Fischer his loser's share of $1,225 and then comes up with a suggestion that frankly shocked me: 'The committee might set aside this $1,225 for a psychiatrist. Every effort should be made to induce Fischer to submit to examination by competent doctors who can make a report as to Fischer's mental condition and what is required under the circumstances. I think it would be premature to make too many decisions regarding the future of Fischer until more was known as to the true nature of his mental condition and what the specialists recommend.'

At the end of his letter, the 'enigma' appears: 'Up to now Chess in the United States has been as clean as a dog's tooth without a breath of scandal appearing anywhere and this is the first time the American Chess Fraternity has been confronted with a problem that has developed from the "enigmatic case of Bobby Fischer".'

■ ■ ■

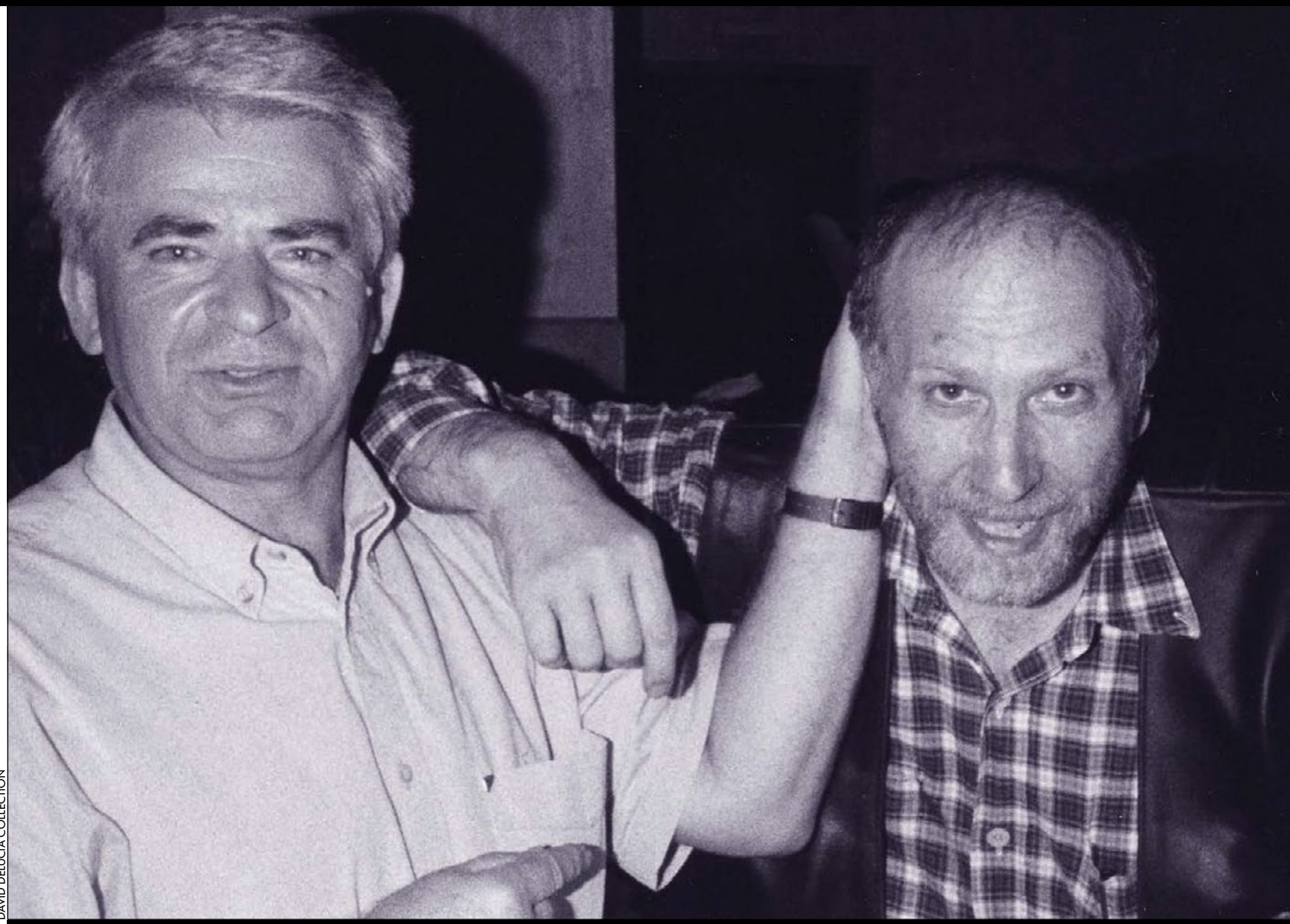
We know from Frank Brady's Fischer biography *Endgame* that Regina Fischer took her son to a children's psychiatrist, Dr. Harold Kline, when she felt he was becoming too obsessed with chess and neglected his homework. She was reassured that he wasn't 'neurotic' and didn't need therapy. Regina's maternal worries were not entirely taken away and she sought a second opinion from Dr. Ariel Mengarini, a psychiatrist who himself was a chess master. Perhaps that didn't help. In any case he told her that he 'could think of a lot worse things than chess that a person could devote himself to.'

These concerns of a mother don't sound exceptional and it would not make much sense to argue that the doctors she consulted possibly didn't give young Bobby the attention he needed. They probably saw more children who created their own world and didn't think much of it. However, Bisno's letter, dated August 21, 1961, does sound like a wake-up call. Here's an educated man who states without a trace of irony that he believes 18-year-old Bobby Fischer needs psychiatric treatment. That's not something you say easily, and it should have set off some alarm bells.

Bisno's letter is not mentioned in Brady's book, probably because the author didn't know it, as in his acknowledgements there is no reference to the Piatigorsky archives. But even if he had known it, you may wonder if Brady would have given the letter any prominence. In his book

WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME ST. LOUIS

Chess benefactor Jacqueline Piatigorsky and Bobby Fischer in front of the Herman Steiner Chess Club in Los Angeles when everything was still hunky-dory.



DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

March 23, 1995. A rare moment of light-hearted banter. After the Match of the Century, Spassky and Fischer developed a special relationship. When he received the news of Fischer's death in 2008, Spassky wrote: 'My brother is dead.'

he approaches the conflict at the end of the Reshevsky-Fischer match in a rather factual manner, presenting the positions of both sides: the sponsor wants to go to a concert, the chess player doesn't want to deviate from the schedule they have agreed on. Not for a moment does he suggest that Fischer's stance might be seen as the ungrateful and boorish behaviour of someone who is so self-centred that he cannot understand why Jacqueline Piatigorsky, who made the match possible, wants to go to her husband's concert. He writes: 'When Bobby, a classically late sleeper, heard of yet another change of schedule, he protested immediately. He simply could not play at that time, he said. "It's ridiculous." Bobby also didn't see why he had to cater to Mrs. Piatigorsky. She could always come to the game after the concert, he argued. They'd probably still be playing.'

A factual description that allows the loyal Fischer fan to think: 'Well done, Bobby. Don't let yourself be manipulated by others, stand up for your rights. As always, no compromises!'

Brady explains or defends this 'factual' approach in his Author's Note, where he says: 'Many lives, and then second and even third acts, constitute the drama of Bobby Fischer, but my attempt here was to delineate just *one* of Fischer's kaleidoscopic personalities—that of a genius, an inwardly tortured warrior—and within that framework to capture his shifting identities and roles.' And he concludes this introduction to his book with: 'We may not—and perhaps *should* not—forgive Bobby Fischer's twisted political and antireligious assaults, but we should never forget his sheer brilliance on the chessboard.'

In other words, Brady does want to separate the genius from the individual, the artist from the art, but he is more or less exclusively going to focus on the chess genius. This not only has the drawback that it paints a partial picture, but also detracts from the genius, as the genius cannot be seen in its purity because Fischer's deviant behaviour is not clearly separated from it. And inevitably this approach gets the author into trouble. After the match in 1972, Fischer received numerous offers, totalling up to $ 10 million it is said, but he turned them all down. Brady cites the explanation that several people gave for his refusal, including the following: 'International master George Koltanowski conjectured that Bobby just didn't trust people and didn't want to

be cheated: "There's a word for it in German: *Verfolgungswahnsinn*", he said. "It means 'persecution mania."' Interesting, the reader may think, could there be any truth to this claim? But instead of commenting on Koltanowski's observation, Brady continues: 'But perhaps the best explanation of why Bobby cast aside all financial offers came from Bobby himself: "People are trying to exploit me. Nobody is going to make a nickel off of me!" The best explanation for sure.

And when Fischer gets increasingly afraid that the Soviets may harm him because of the threat he poses to the Soviet hegemony in chess, Brady writes: 'Of course, Bobby's fears were thought by some to be incipient paranoia, and although it was highly unlikely that the KGB was plotting against him, even paranoids can have real enemies. At restaurants Bobby always carried with him a virtual pharmacy of remedies and potions to immediately counteract any poisons that the Soviets might slip into his food or drink.'

A bit paranoid and highly unlikely that anything was going to happen, but paranoids can also have real enemies. Does that mean that there is proof that the Soviets really had plans to poison Fischer? I don't think so, and I sincerely doubt that Brady has seen evidence that suggests otherwise.

In the introduction to his biography, Brady writes that 'Bobby and I were friends, with a tempestuous relationship that remained on for years and eventually was off.' That eventually it was off is no surprise, as in the end Fischer was always off with almost anyone, including the kind people in Iceland who did everything in their power to get him out of a Japanese prison so he could lead a life of freedom in their country. The year before he died, Fischer wrote about the Icelandic people in the cruellest and crudest of terms ('The weather and air quality are terrible, but the people are even worse. Incredibly low ethics. I can generalize about Icelanders by now because I have enough experience to do so. If you will study the faces of the Icelandic men they are frankly hideous ugly and inhuman. No warmth no humanity'. Etc. etc.) Still, I don't think any of the Icelanders would be upset if they read what unstoppably came pouring from Fischer's troubled mind, as they knew how he suffered. They had wanted to help him because they didn't want him to rot in a prison cell. They had come to understand that the accomplishment of this mission was their reward, that they should not expect gratitude from him, as gratitude was beyond him.

Many people around Fischer wanted to be his friend, some even unconditionally. The best and sincerest reason I have ever heard, expressed in a touching manner, was from his long-time friend Eugene Torre, when I interviewed him (see New In Chess 2012/7) in Istanbul in 2012: '(I)f you have a special child, we give some extra attention, extra care, sometimes you give some exemption. Bobby was like that […]. He has this special talent, gift, but because of his upbringing he is a special child. I was hoping to be considerate with him. He should be treated with the care, the extra understanding you give a special child. And then let's enjoy his gift, you know, […] let's enjoy what he can offer, because he is really a brilliant chess player.'

Frank Brady probably wanted to remain Bobby Fischer's friend, even knowing that it had become one-way traffic, but this wish should not have stopped him from separating the gen-

Bobby Fischer and two of his most loyal friends, Svetozar Gligoric and Eugene Torre (together with his wife Marilin and his daughter Nicole) at the end of the match in Sveti Stefan and Belgrade in 1992.

ius from the individual much more clearly. Fischer's extraordinary chess talent would have shone even brighter on the pages of his book if he had called a spade a spade. Now he does quote Judit Polgar as saying: 'He was an extremely great player, but crazy: a sick psycho' and her father Laszlo: 'He was schizophrenic', but leaves it at that. Seemingly afraid to give his own view on Fischer's mental health, hoping to show loyalty, but in fact doing the opposite.

■ ■ ■

I met Bobby Fischer once, in September 1992, when he was playing his second match against Boris Spassky in Sveti Stefan. On my way there I had enough time to daydream. Because of the civil war in Yugoslavia there were no direct flights from Amsterdam to Belgrade. I flew to Budapest and from there I travelled to Belgrade by bus. The next day a small plane took me from Belgrade to Montenegro. In the past years I had interviewed Kasparov, Karpov, Spassky and many other chess greats. Just imagine I could interview Bobby Fischer. Of course I knew that Fischer loathed journalists, but that didn't stop me from thinking up warm and friendly talks. He would understand that I was different, and after some hesitation he would agree to a wonderful interview and reveal the real Bobby. And other hopeful thoughts based on nothing.

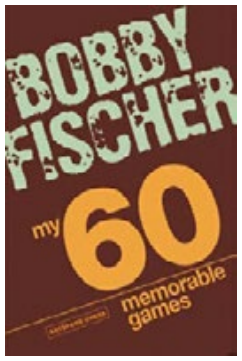
The first hurdle was to get in touch with him at all. A formidable challenge to start with. This is not so easy to imagine now, but you should not forget that at that point Fischer was a total mystery. He had been completely off the radar for more than a decade, and when he resurfaced after his 'wilderness years' every shred of information was seen as big news.

My trump to get to meet him in the first place were all the games of Spassky that we had in our New In Chess database. He had asked for those through Gligoric and I had them with me in both digital and printed form. The day that I arrived in Sveti Stefan everything seemed to be going my way. I wrote a letter to Fischer saying I had arrived with the goodies and gave it to Eugene Torre. Only a couple of hours later Svetozar Gligoric came to my hotel with the request to join him and go and see Fischer. Everything went so smoothly that I barely had time to realize that I really was going to meet one of my heroes, the man who, more than anyone else, had made me love chess.

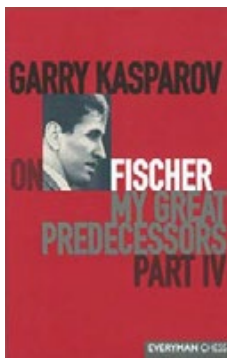
I spent forty-five minutes in his company, three quarters of an hour that were both thrilling and utterly confusing. And led me to the bitter conclusion that Bobby Fischer was not well. This was my first impression: 'Fischer gets up, tall, overweight, and slightly clumsy. He tries to fulfil the duties of the host and shakes hands, but his nervously darting eyes betray his unease with the situation. This is not a man accustomed to receiving visitors.' Later I noticed his shoes, not knowing these were a pair of his favourite Birkenstocks: 'Big, black lace-less rubber clogs that, combined with his somewhat clumsy way of moving about and his tall, thickset figure, strengthen the impression of some sort of Frankenstein monster. An essentially kind and innocent person who can suddenly lash out when he is overcome by his monomaniacal obsession.' Interestingly, I later discovered that Brad Darrach had used a similar comparison when describing Fischer when he was 20 years younger: 'Bobby functions like Frankenstein's creature, a man made of fragments connected by wires and animated by a monstrous will. When the will collapses or the wires cross, Bobby cannot execute the simplest acts.'

During our talk the main topic soon was and remained the fixing of games between Karpov and Kasparov in their World Championship matches. With great determination he tried to prove his points, allowing no room for jokes or reservations. While everyone else

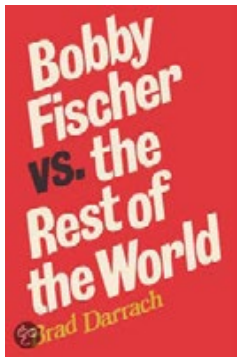
Bobby Fischer
Recommended reading



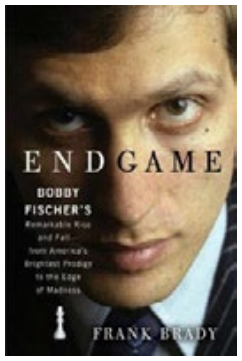
MY 60 MEMORABLE GAMES
Bobby Fischer
A classic collection. The great man in his own write. Memorable games, unforgettable comments.



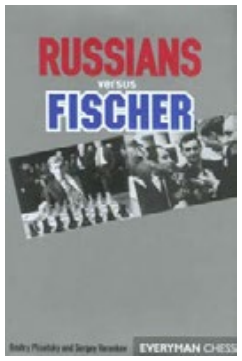
MY GREAT PREDECESSORS IV
Garry Kasparov
The best of the series, Kasparov on his favourite predecessor.



BOBBY FISCHER VS. THE REST OF THE WORLD
Brad Darrach
An eye-opening page-turner. Fischer at the peak of his craft from up close.



ENDGAME
Frank Brady
Not the definitive biography, but a fascinating book and an excellent read.



RUSSIANS VS. FISCHER
Dmitry Plisetsky & Sergey Voronkov
Secret documents reveal how much shock and awe Fischer inspired in the number one chess nation.

in the room, including his girlfriend Zita, listened in silence, he expounded his views. Disgruntled and indignant. On a couple of occasions he suddenly turned friendly and showed a smile that miraculously lit up his face, but barely had I jumped at these opportunities to engage in lighter conversation or he returned to his grim self. Split personality, schizophrenic, were the words that automatically came to mind whenever I thought of Bobby Fischer in the weeks that followed.

The next day I was still flummoxed by what I had experienced, but also excited. After all, scores of journalists had tried in vain to get in touch with him in the past decade. In a modest way I wanted to celebrate this memorable moment. I invited Yasser Seirawan and his Dutch girlfriend (and later wife) Yvette, who had just arrived in Sveti Stefan, for dinner. The subject of our dinner conversation was predictable as, of course, they were dying to know what Bobby had been like.

Not hiding my disappointment, I frankly told them what I had seen, and said that they would most likely meet Fischer themselves in the weeks ahead, so they would be able to draw their own conclusions. Sveti Stefan is a small place, after all. And they did indeed meet and spend a considerable amount of time together, but whether Yasser wanted to draw any conclusions was the question. In the book he wrote about the match, *No Regrets*, he mentions our dinner and essentially reduces what I had told them to a succinct: 'Dirk's brief encounter offered no clues.' Not a word about the fact that Fischer might be mentally ill.

Indeed, the next time I met Yasser and Yvette, at the opening ceremony of the Tilburg tournament in the Netherlands, they made a point of telling people that they did not understand what I had been writing about in *New In Chess* and the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad*. They had had a great time with Bobby, he was absolutely fine and, as a further sign of how pleasant and normal he was, when they parted he had even kissed Yvette.

Obviously I was surprised by their emphatic longing for denial, but at the same time I understood that Yasser wanted to cling to his deep wish to see Bobby Fischer as the person he wanted him to be, a dear man he wanted to be friends with. After all, he wasn't the only one.

If Seirawan had hoped to come to a working relationship with Fischer by his careful diplomatic manoeuvring in *No Regrets*, he was naturally going to be disappointed. Like everyone else before him and quite a few after him. As we can read in *Triumph and Despair*, Fischer hated the book. But then, what other reaction could have been expected? In particular Fischer picked out a conversation in Sveti Stefan that Seirawan describes. A conversation, light-hearted and full of banter, about the prearranged Kasparov-Karpov games, in which Seirawan asks some clever questions. At the end he has Fischer laughing, a clear sign that essentially he also understood himself that his suspicions were a bit far-fetched. In the aforementioned letter to Scotland Yard, Fischer cites extensively from the book and then writes: 'Can you imagine me just sitting there and letting this grinner fart in my face like that for 2 or 3 minutes non-stop? You couldn't do better than that Yasser? No one but a half-wit, a complete ignoramus, or someone totally brainwashed by the Jews could possibly believe such drivel. Yasser, as we used to say in Brooklyn: Why don't you shut up your ass and give your mouth a chance?'

> 'While everyone else in the room, including his girlfriend Zita, listened in silence, he expounded his views. Disgruntled and indignant.'

And so, despite our different approaches, in the end Seirawan and I met a similar fate, as in the same document I am called a 'little twerp whose origins are not hard to guess' and *New In Chess* is described as 'a Jew-controlled magazine'.

There was no way to write about Bobby Fischer and receive his blessing unless you praised and flattered him and agreed with everything he

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came up with. In this sense, the letters of Gligoric that are published in *Triumph and Despair* are particularly painful to read. There can be no doubt that Gligoric meant well and only wanted to help his friend, but in order to remain in his good books he had to make considerable sacrifices. His patience with Fischer is saintlike and you can only admire him for his loyalty, but often it is embarrassing, for instance in a passage like this: 'You are probably aware of your personality, that you are a very intelligent man above all standards and with very developed interior life and that you react easily and very lively to each impression from outside.'

Or downright depressing when he lets himself be lured into Fischer's delusions in attempts to flatter him, as when he writes: 'You asked me about dr. Euwe. I am not 100% sure, but I was told that he was the Dutch Jew long, long ago, just after the war, by someone who should know, and that Euwe was very careful in hiding his origin during the German military occupation of the Netherlands. […] Euwe's first true name is Machgielis (Max was the nickname or the second choice, I do not know) and I wonder whether it is an old Dutch or Jewish name.'

■ ■ ■

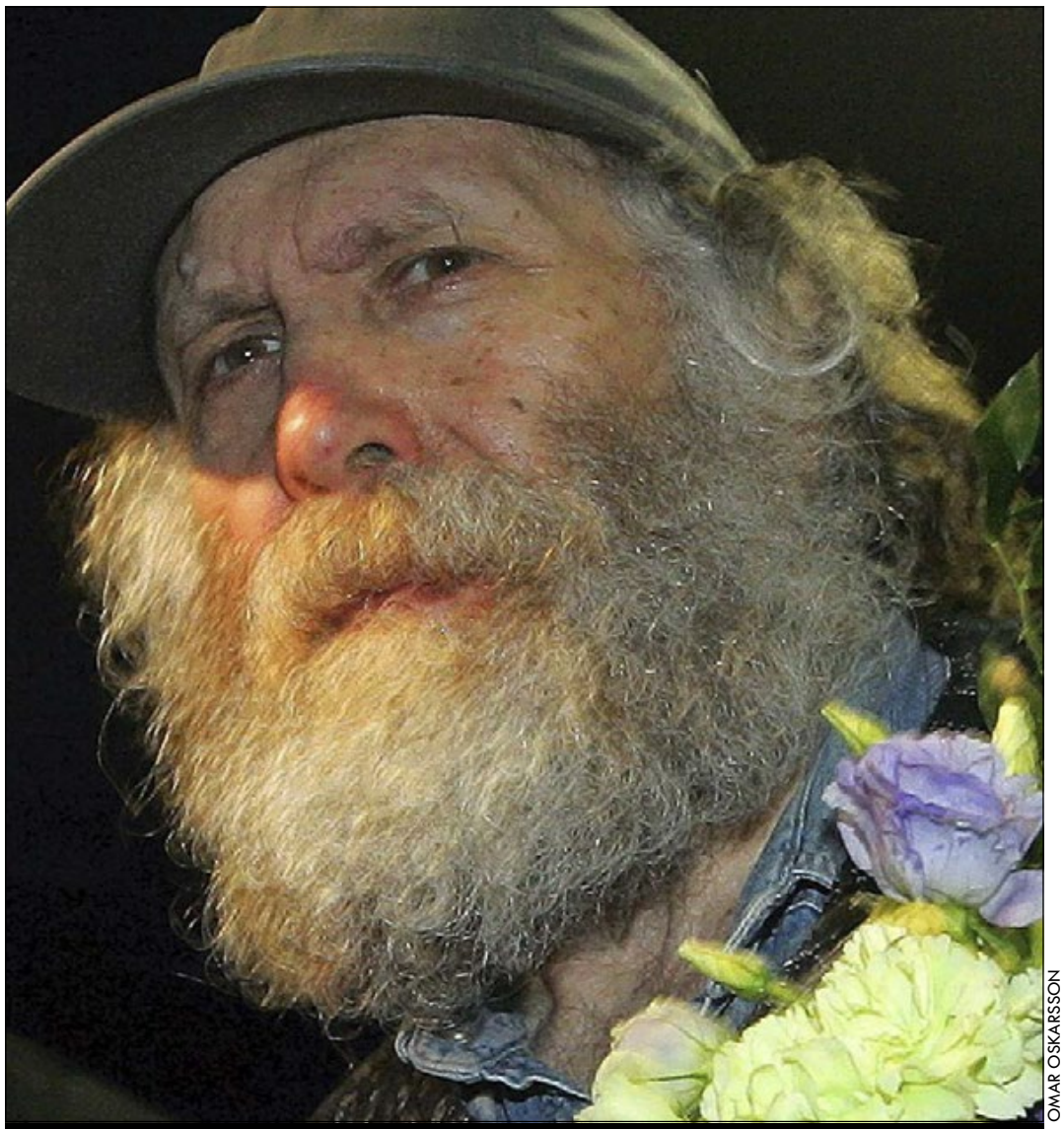
Given the countless examples of Fischer's selfish, rude and intransigent behaviour, and the impact it had on people, it is truly baffling that the permanent wish to appease him was generally so strong that hardly anyone openly turned against him, probably because of the awareness that any outright criticism, justified or not, would irrevocably sever your relations with him. In *Triumph and Despair* the rare exception is a reply bursting with anger by Joseph Choate Jr. to a letter in which Fischer apparently told Choate and Choate's Lawyers that they were no longer working for him and asked them to forward to him all his documents. Here are some revealing excerpts from Choate's letter, dated 25 February 1999: 'Frankly I was both shocked and offended to receive this letter. I was even more offended when I learned that when Rosemary telephoned you to express her sympathy over the storage problem situation, you hung up on her! How dare you? She has NEVER been anything but gracious to you. I consider your actions in that regard boorish, ill-mannered and frankly, bordering on the unforgivable.'

DAVID DELUCIA COLLECTION

The bedroom of Fischer's apartment in Budapest, including his favourite Birkenstocks and a copy of the November 12, 1971 issue of *Life* with 'The Deadly Gamesman' on the cover.

'I have little need for "clients" who take up enormous amounts of time and who NEVER pay ANYTHING for whatever representation/legal counsel they receive. […] I was shocked to hear that Chip received a similar "termination" letter from you. I understand it followed a particularly vicious personal and professional attack which you made on him during a telephone conversation: a conversation in which YOU presumed to tell Chip what the law is and what your legal rights were in the situation. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You know full well that had it not been for Chip Pashayan, who worked for months to put together the Spassky tournament, you wouldn't be sitting in Hungary with several million dollars in the bank. Rather you would most likely still be living (under an assumed name), in that miserable little apartment in the Fairfax district. It was as a direct result of his untiring efforts that you were again brought onto the stage of world chess. And Chip devoted all of his time and efforts in this regard without hope or expectation of personal gain, financial or otherwise. He never received ONE CENT from you or anyone else as a result of his efforts. In fact, my guess is that he probably spent thousands of dollars out of his own pocket. Apparently, however, all of this counts for nothing in your mind. […] You are an unmitigated ingrate! […] Your letter which states "I wish to close out any and all business or other contacts with you PERMANENTLY" is in the great scheme of things, of little consequence. However, your doing so, merely gives irrefutable proof of your exceedingly poor judgment in matters of people, and in particular who and who not to trust.'

This is the kind of reaction you would have expected Fischer to spark countless times if he was so normal as so many people kept insisting in the face of a mountain of contradicting evidence. Still, it hardly ever happened, which seems to be a clear indication that many of them knew full



OMAR OSKARSSON

Bobby Fischer on his arrival in Reykjavik from Japan on March 24, 2005.

well that he was far from normal and that arguing made no sense. They were only reluctant to bring up his mental problems for fear of losing him as a 'friend'. Instead of trying to help him and see if he could be treated, they looked the other way, inviting the rest of the world to condemn his outrageous statements and acts.

■ ■ ■

Despite my conviction that Bobby Fischer suffered from a mental disorder, it is beyond my competence to even speculate about the exact nature of that disorder. Fortunately, this task has been undertaken by a professional, Joseph G. Ponterotto, a counselling psychologist and author, whose *A Psychobiography of Bobby Fischer (2012)* is recommended reading for anyone interested in the subject. Looking at a wide variety of data, Ponterotto convincingly builds his case and comes to the conclusion that 'throughout childhood and adolescence, Bobby exhibited symptoms of Paranoid Personality Disorder (PPD).' He argues that the structure and discipline of preparing for competitions may have confined or contained his paranoid thoughts and behaviour. Therefore the disorder seems to have gotten free rein after he won the world title in 1972. As Fischer said himself in the Johnny Carson show after his victory: 'I woke up the day after it was over and felt different, like something was taken out of me.' Ponterotto writes: 'Perhaps chess was an anchor for his sanity and functioning, and without that anchor he was now more vulnerable than ever.' He then gives a list of dramatic events such as his arrest in Pasadena in 1981 (about which Fischer wrote the pamphlet 'I was tortured in the Pasadena Jailhouse'), the arrest warrant in 1992 issued by the US State Department for violating US sanctions restricting business with Yugoslavia, the untimely loss of close family members (his mother Regina in 1997, his sister Joan in 1998) and his arrest and prison time in Japan, 18 days in 2000 and nine months in 2004. 'Collectively, these intense psychosocial stressors […] contributed to his psychological vulnerability which may have facilitated the development of non-bizarre, persecutory delusions which now were superimposed on his possible premorbid (pre-existing) Paranoid Personality Disorder.'

Having read that, you may be longing to think about Bobby Fischer the chess player, and rightly so. There is an awful lot to enjoy and we can only do so once we have freed ourselves of the burden of ignoring or finding excuses for everything his disorder led him to do or say. There is no need for this. He does not have to be blamed for anything. Once you've come to that conclusion, you can fully immerse yourself in his fabulous chess again.

One of the documents I started looking forward to when I heard it was going to be included in *Triumph and Despair*, contains hand-written notes by Fischer to a number of games from the blitz tournament in Herceg Novi in 1970. And here it is, the beauty and brilliance of his chess, separated from the individual. Scoring an unbelievable 19 points from 22 games, Fischer trounced a world-class field, finishing 4½(!) points ahead of Mikhail Tal. Fischer wrote the notes for a Yugoslav book on the tournament. They had never appeared in an English or American book or magazine before.

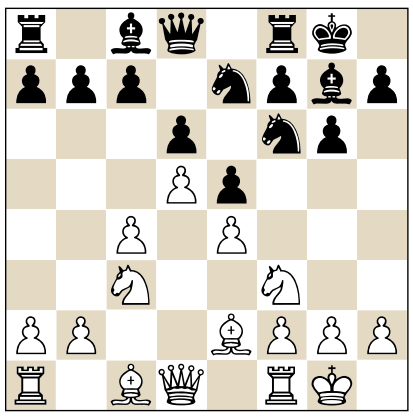
The last word I'd like to leave to Tal, who said about Fischer's performance in Herceg Novi: 'His playing is of the same kind as in tournament games; everything is simple,

follows a simple pattern, logical, and without any spectacular effects. He makes his moves quickly and practically without errors. Throughout the tournament I think he did not leave a single pawn *en prise*, while all the others managed to lose a whole set of pieces in this way. Fischer's result is very, very impressive… Despite all his whims, intransigence and eccentricity, Fischer loves chess, is fanatically devoted to the game, and is not afraid of anyone.'

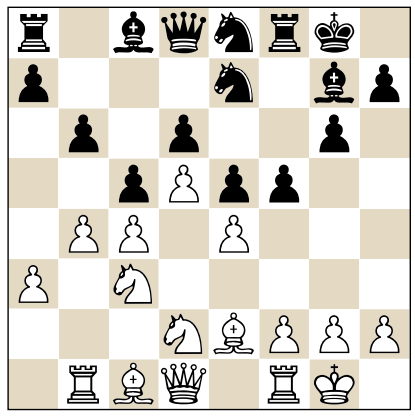
NOTES BY
Bobby Fischer

KI 7.4 – E97
Viktor Kortchnoi
Bobby Fischer
Herceg Novi 1970

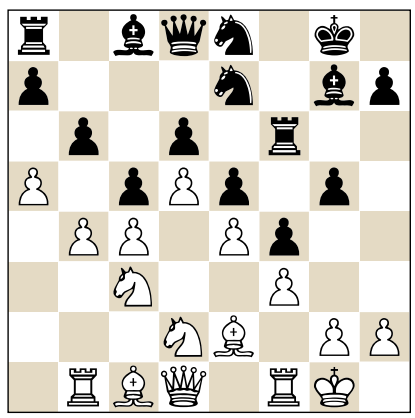
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7



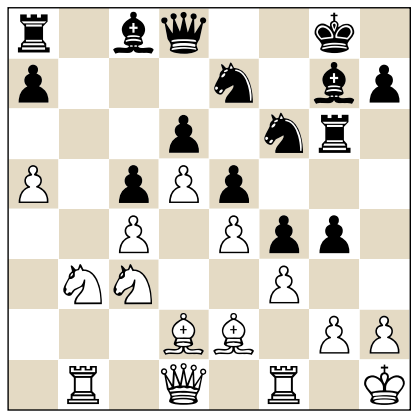
9.♘d2
This move apparently is considered best by the Russians. In the 'Turnir Mira' in 1970, Petrosian played 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♘d2!? ♘f4 11.a4, but without great success, against Gligoric.
9...c5!
I think this is a logical move. Black takes a tempo from his kingside attack to slow down White's queenside initiative, which usually comes quite quickly with b4, c5 etc.
10.a3 ♘e8 11.b4 b6 12.♖b1 f5!
Having made all the necessary precautions on the queenside, Black is now ready to attack on the king's flank.



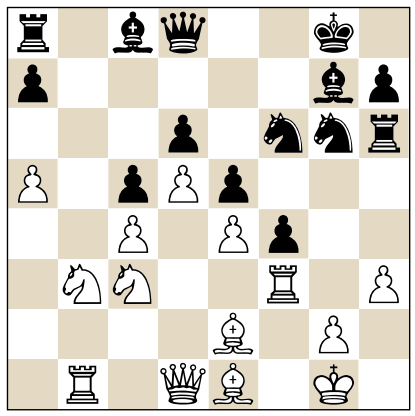
13.f3 f4 14.a4 g5 15.a5 ♖f6!



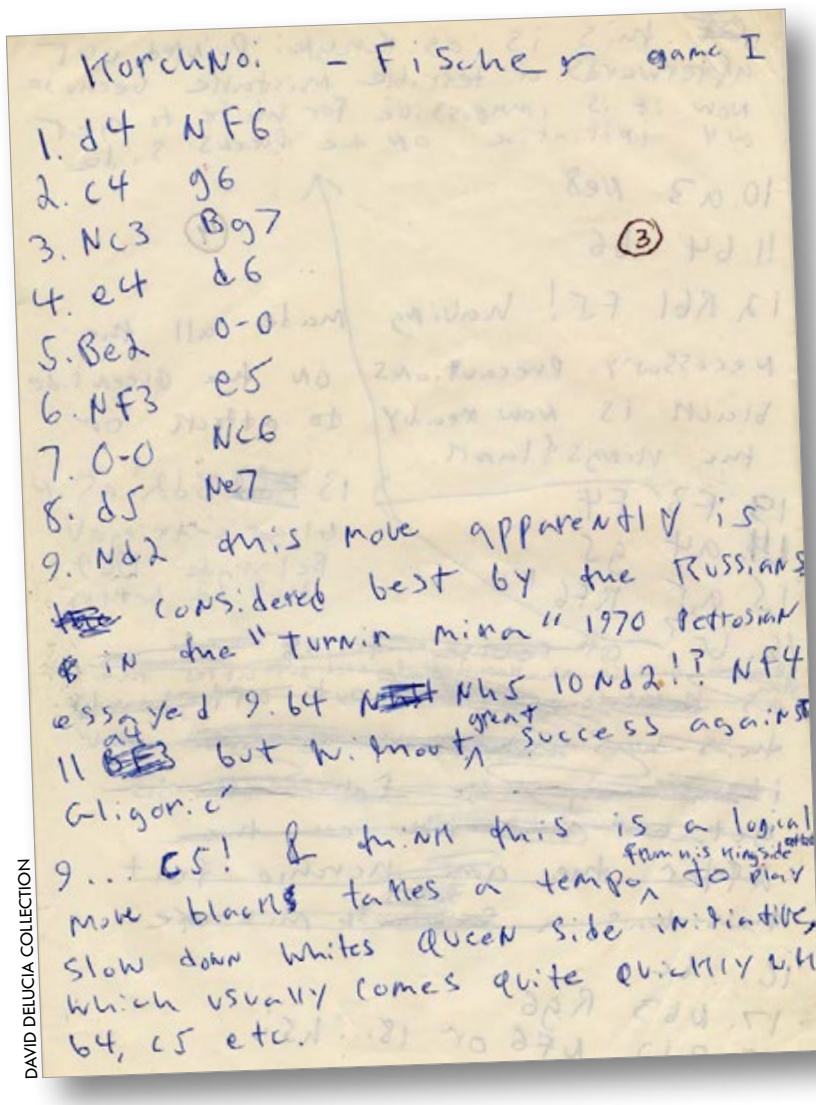
16.bxc5?
This is, as Kortchnoi pointed out afterwards, a terrible mistake, because now it is impossible for White to get any initiative on the queenside.
16...bxc5 17.♘b3 ♖g6 18.♗d2 ♘f6
Or 18...h5!.
19.♔h1 g4



Maybe more exact was 19...h5!.
20.fxg4
Forced because of the threat of 20...g3 and then White cannot play 21.h3 because of 21...♗xh3 etc.
20...♘xg4 21.♖f3?
21.♗f3! was better, with a more tenacious defence.
21...♖h6 22.h3 ♘g6 23.♔g1 ♘f6 24.♗e1



24...♘h8!! This attacking manoeuvre is decisive.
25.♖d3 ♘f7 26.♗f3
26.h4!? held out a little longer.
26...♘g5 27.♕e2 ♖g6 28.♔f1


KortchNoi - Fischer game I
1. d4 NF6
2. c4 g6
3. Nc3 Bg7
4. e4 d6
5. Be2 0-0
6. NF3 e5
7. 0-0 NC6
8. d5 Ne7
9. Nd2 this move apparently is considered best by the Russians in the "Turnir Mira" 1970 Petrosian played 9. b4 Nh5 10 Nd2!? NF4 11 BE3 but w. much great success against Gligor. c'
9... c5! & think this is a logical move black takes a tempo from his kingside attack to play slow down whites queen side initiative which usually comes quite quickly with b4, c5 etc.
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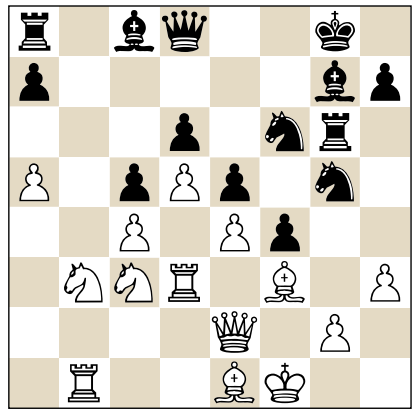
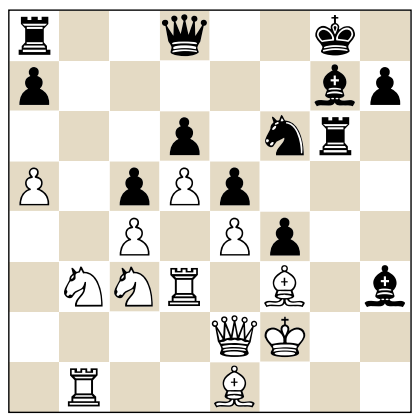


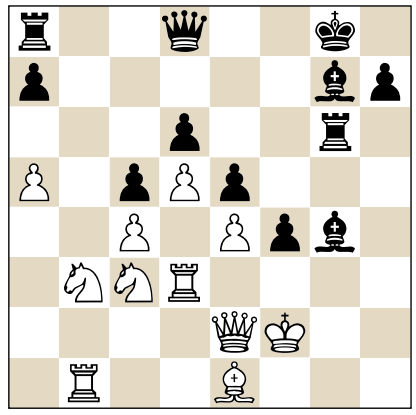
28.♔h2 ♕d7 threatening 29...♘xh3 etc.

28...♘xh3! 29.gxh3 ♗xh3+ 30.♔f2



At this moment my hand hovered over White's pawn on e4 – but at the last second I realized that 30...♘xe4+?? is answered by 31.♕xe4! and White wins.

30...♘g4+ 31.♗xg4 ♗xg4



And here Kortchnoi thought about a minute and a half and not seeing a defence to the double threat of 32...♗xe2 and 32...♕h4+ resigned.

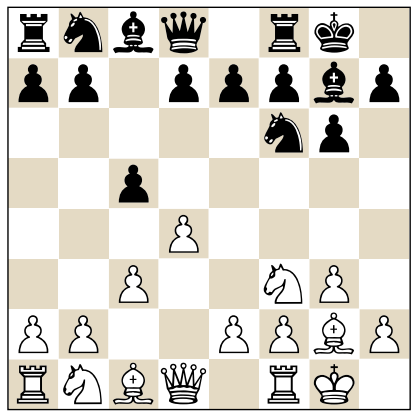
It is interesting to note however that Kortchnoi played 9.♘d2 again against Udovcic in the 'Turnir Mira', so apparently he has an improvement in mind.

NOTES BY
Bobby Fischer

RE 21.1 – A49
Bobby Fischer
Mikhail Tal
Herceg Novi 1970

1.g3 g6 2.♗g2 ♗g7 3.♘f3 c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4

I played this opening in Benkö's style.



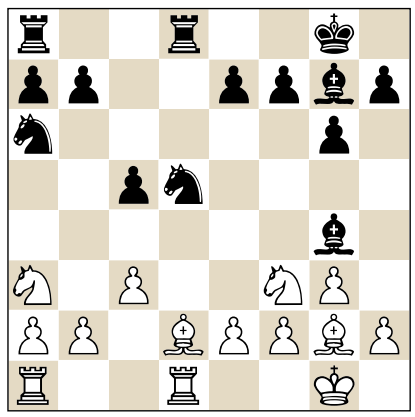
6...d6?

The ensuing endgame is clearly better for White, because his bishop on g2 is more active than Black's on g7 and Black has weakened squares.

Also not particularly recommendable is 6...♕b6 7.d5! as in Benko-Fischer, Curaçao 1962, when Black's queen on b6 was misplaced.

Correct for Black was 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 d5! with an equal game as in Smyslov-Fischer in this same blitz-tournament.

7.dxc5 dxc5 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♗e3 ♘a6 10.♘a3 ♘d5 11.♖fd1 ♗g4 12.♗d2



12...h6

To keep White out of g5.

Or 12...♘ac7 but after 13.♘c4 b6?

(otherwise 14.♘a5 with pressure) 14.♘ce5! ♗e6 (14...♗xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe2 16.♖e1 ♗a6 17.c4 ♘f6 18.♗c3 threatening 19.♘c6 and 19.♗xa8 should win) 15.e4 ♘f6 16.♘c6! ♘a6 17.♗f1 c4 18.♘g5 Black is lost.

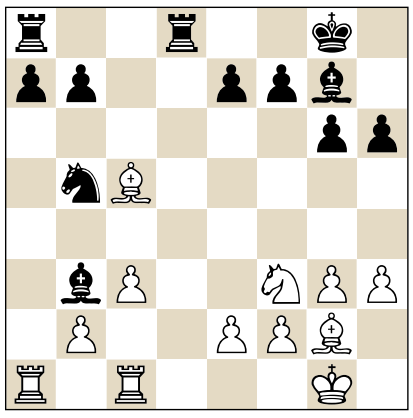
13.h3

13.♘b5 or 13.♘e1 were probably more exact.

13...♗e6 14.♘b5 ♘dc7

14...♘b6 gave more counterplay.

15.a4 ♗b3 16.♖dc1 ♘xb5 17.axb5 ♘c7 18.♗e3 ♘xb5 19.♗xc5



19...b6??

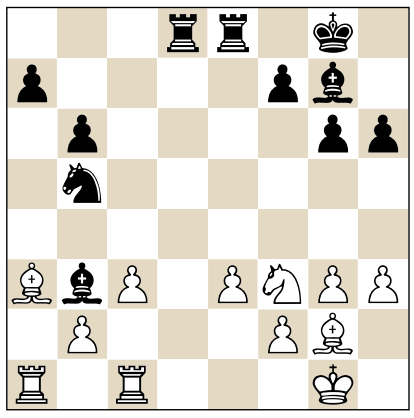
White's advantage was manifest, but it was not necessary to give away a pawn. Correct was 19...e6. Still after 20.e3 threatening 21.♘d4, White keeps an edge.

20.♗xe7 ♖e8 21.♗a3 ♖ad8

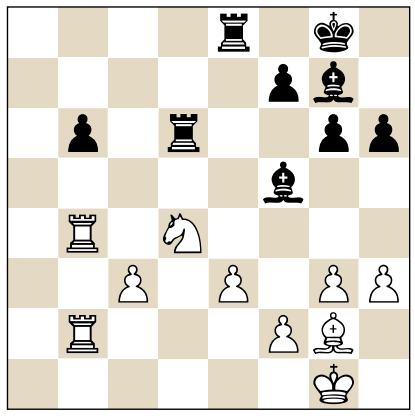
21...♖xe2 22.♗f1! wins the exchange.

22.e3

A pawn up and a powerful square on d4 spells easy winning for White.



22...a5 23.♘d4 ♘xa3 24.♖xa3 ♗c4 25.♗f1 ♗d5 26.♗g2 ♗c4 27.♖a4 ♗d3 28.b4! axb4 29.♖xb4 ♖d6 30.♖d1 ♗c2 31.♖d2 ♗f5 32.♖db2



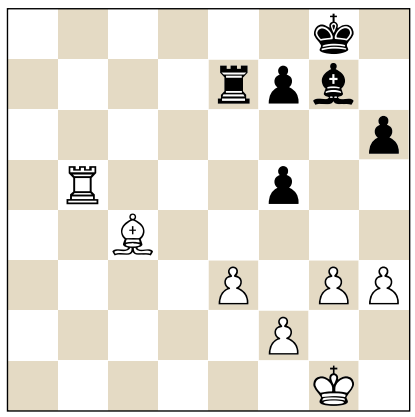
32...♖c8

32...♖b8 of course was slightly more tenacious, but after 33.♘xf5 gxf5 Black's pawn structure on the king-side is hopeless.

33.♖xb6 ♖xb6 34.♖xb6 ♖xc3 35.♘xf5 gxf5 36.♗d5

36.♖b5 was more precise.

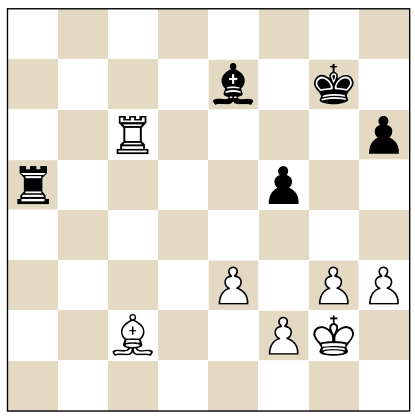
36...♖c7 37.♖b5 ♖e7 38.♗c4



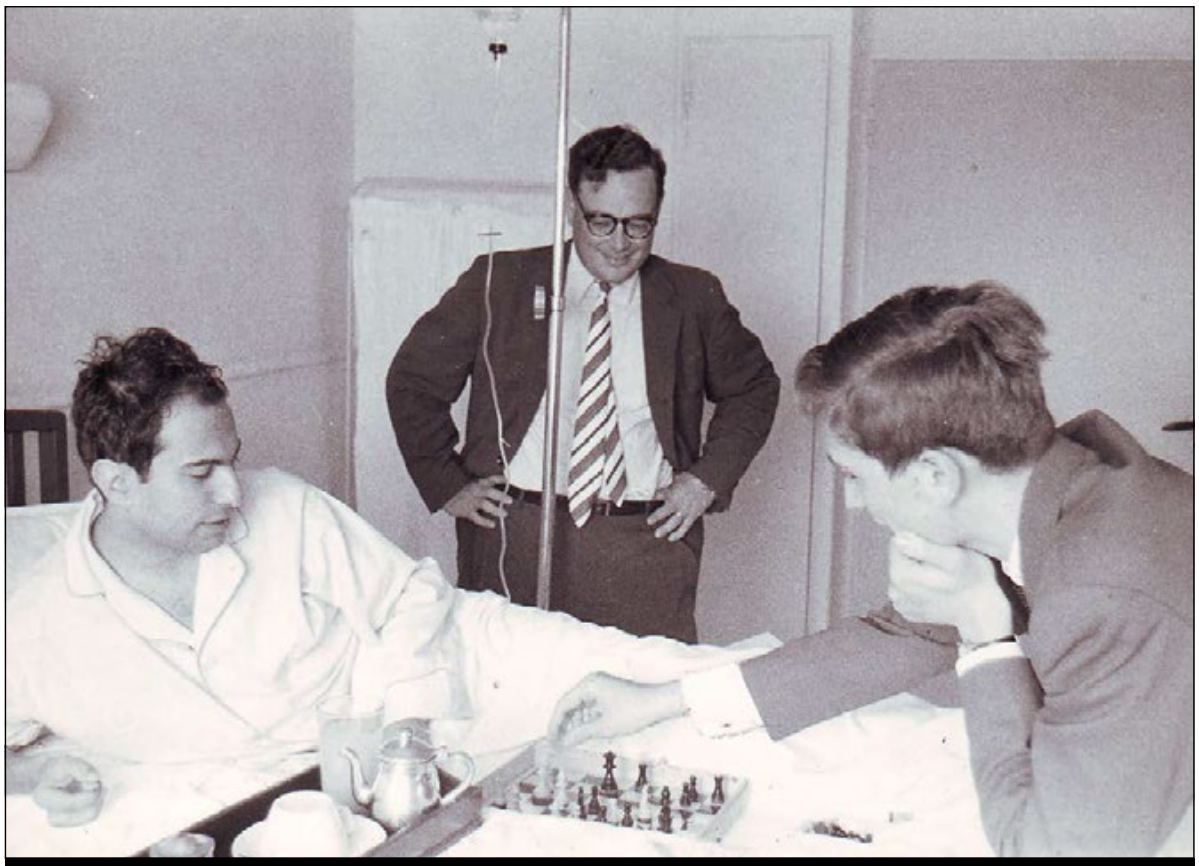
38...♖e5?

Better to give up the pawn on f5 with 38...f4 or 38...♗f8. It is just a matter of time in any event.

39.♖b7 ♔h7 40.♖xf7 ♔g6 41.♖c7 ♗f8 42.♖c6+ ♔g7 43.♗d3 ♗e7 44.♗c2 ♖a5 45.♔g2



And White won. ■



Bobby Fischer always got on well with Mikhail Tal. When the Magician from Riga was hospitalized during the 1962 Curaçao Candidates' tournament, the American was the only participant to visit him.

Reykjavik

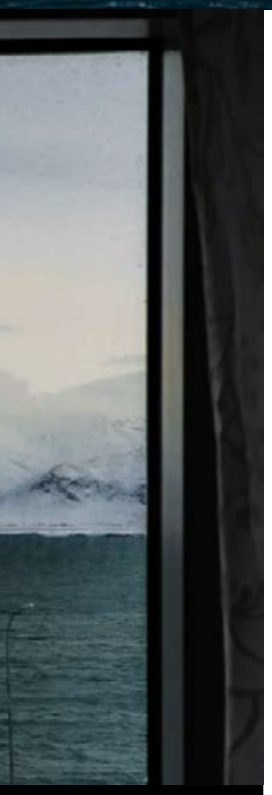
PHOTOS: ALINA L'AMI

On his arrival in Reykjavik, Erwin l'Ami stares out of his hotel room window. Photographed by his wife Alina, the Dutch GM registers the uninviting weather outside. Little does he know what the next days will bring.

Erwin's Saga

Dutch victory in Reykjavik Open

What does it take to win a major Open? Good form, gritty chess, great determination and a bit of luck? On the eve of his 30th birthday **Erwin l'Ami** showed it all at the Reykjavik Open. In a personal account the tournament winner relives 'the best two weeks of my chess career'.



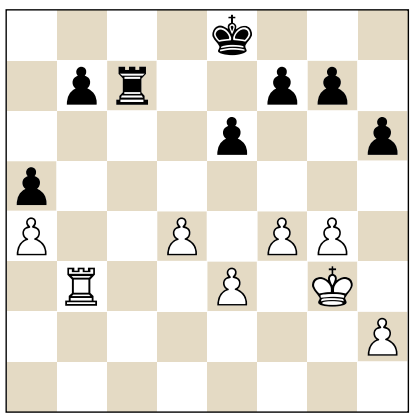
Taking your time to let things sink in is often a good way to come to an understanding. But no matter how I look at it from the quiet of my home, I am still not entirely sure what happened to me in the city of Reykjavik. For the past four years, every March my wife Alina and I have been going to the Icelandic capital to participate in the Reykjavik Open and, not in the last place, to enjoy the country and its hospitable people. From a sporting point of view the previous years didn't yield much. True, in 2014 I started with 5½ out of 6, but after that I was swiftly removed from the top boards by Egyptian GM Bassem Amin, never to return there again.

So how did I approach this year's event? To begin with, Alina and I took part in the massive open of Cappelle-la-Grande. My participation there may have passed unnoticed, as I was rather invisible and didn't play much off a big role, but having warmed up, we left for Iceland with a good feeling. Even the horrendous weather conditions couldn't change that. If Cappelle-la-Grande had felt a bit chilly, in Reykjavik the arctic wind blew so hard that on one occasion we were almost swept from our feet and blown into the water as we tried to fight our way from the hotel to the tournament hall along the harbour. But once you'd made it to Harpa, which was again the beautiful playing venue, the winds would cease to exist and be replaced by the

stormy thoughts of a chess player's mind, and all of the attention turned to chess.

Opening

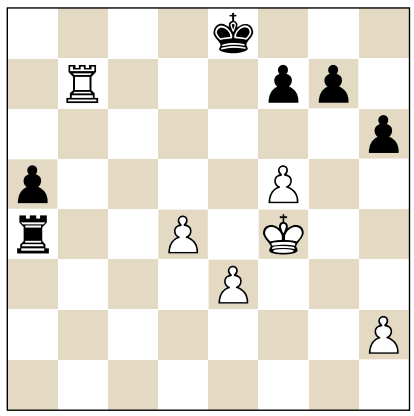
It is my conviction that an early draw is a certain route to get yourself entrapped in the quicksand of an Open, and your problems are only compounded with every further draw: you're drawn in deeper and deeper and your opponents are trying to drag you down with them as well. So a good start is essential to stay on a firm footing! Following a 2/2 start, I faced 16-year-old Chinese talent Yiye Wang. There is a little side-story to this. My wife and I gave live commentary at the World Mind Games in Beijing last December, when in a talk with our colleague Gu Xiaobing, I suddenly discovered that I had never in my life won a game against a Chinese male player!



L'Ami-Yiye Wang
Reykjavik 2015 (3)
position after 33...♖c7

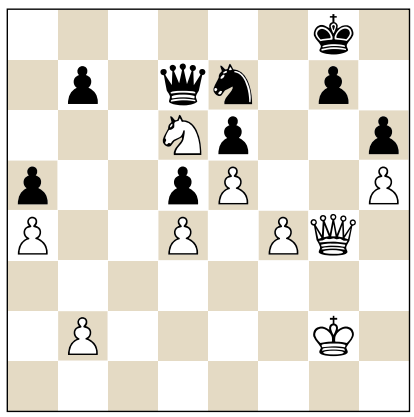
A rook ending with an equal number of pawns. If I continue 34.♖b5 then 34...b6 35.♖xb6 ♖c4! ensures that the material balance will be restored and that Black gains some time compared to the game. So a better option is the immediate **34.f5! exf5?** This plays into White's hands. For better or worse, 34...♔e7 was called for. **35.gxf5 ♖c4 36.♖xb7 ♖xa4 37.♔f4** With the white king marching in, quickly followed by the d- and e-pawns, there is not much Black can do.

> 'It is my conviction that an early draw is a certain route to get yourself entrapped in the quicksand of an Open.'



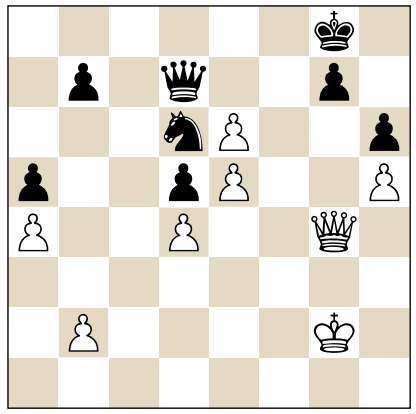
37...♖a3 38.e4 a4 39.♔e5 ♖b3 40.♖a7 a3 41.♔d6 ♖b6+ 42.♔c5 ♖b3 43.e5 ♖b2 44.♖xa3 Black resigned.

A draw in Round 4 was followed by two fighting wins over Sabino Brunello and Jacek Stopa (who made his 3rd GM-norm in Reykjavik, congrats!) and allowed me to enter the middle part of the tournament in high spirits.

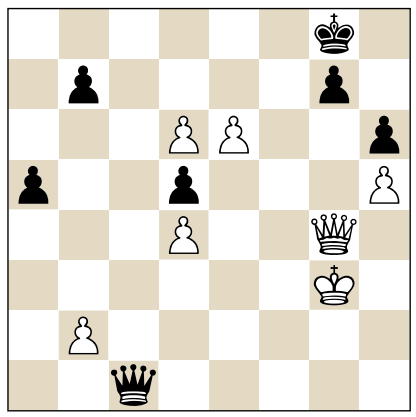


L'Ami-Brunello
Reykjavik 2015 (5)
position after 42. f4

I had been pushing most of the game, but Sabino defended stubbornly and in the diagrammed position I saw a nice way for Black to force a draw with 42...♔h7!?, with the idea that 43.b3 can now be met by 43...♕c6! 44.♕xe6 ♕c2+ 45.♔g3 ♕c1, and a perpetual is unavoidable. For instance 46.♕xe7 ♕g1+ 47.♔h4 ♕h2+ 48.♔g4 ♕g2+, when the f5-square is available but not advisable. The game continued **42...♘c8?! 43.f5 ♘xd6 44.fxe6**



44...♕xa4? 44...♕e7 45.exd6 ♕xd6 46.♕f5 looked very dangerous to me, and indeed 46...♕a6! 47.♕e5 ♕c6! is not easy to find, but it does lead to a draw! **45.exd6 ♕c2+ 46.♔g3 ♕c1** This position is not as 'completely winning' as it looks and shows the enormous complexity of queen endings.

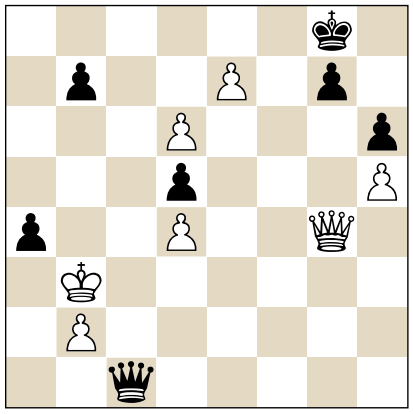


47.e7! The correct push, as will soon become apparent. **47...♕g1+ 48.♔f3 ♕f1+** Taking my king out for a stroll. Instead, 48...♕d1+ 49.♔f2! ♕xg4 50.e8♕+ ♔h7 51.♕g6+! ♕xg6 52.hxg6+ ♔xg6 53. d7 is the reason I pushed my e-pawn earlier. White needs the check on g6.

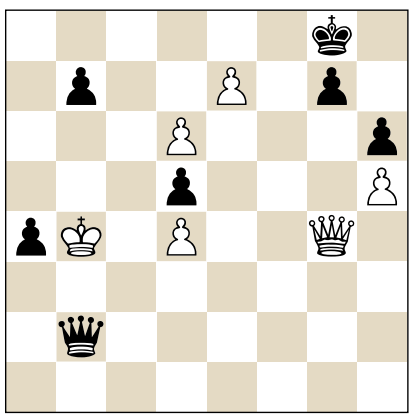
ALINA L'AMI

The 2015 Reykjavik Open celebrated the 80th birthday of Fridrik Olafsson. FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov came to Reykjavik to congratulate the Icelandic legend, who led FIDE from 1978 to 1982.

49.♔e3 ♕c1+ 50.♔d3 ♕b1+ 51.♔c3 ♕c1+ 52.♔b3 a4+



53.♔a3 Let's throw in the old cliché that it's never too late to go wrong: 53.♔xa4? ♕c4+, with perpetual check. **53...♕a1+ 54.♔b4 ♕xb2+**



55.♔c5 And not 55.♔a5?, which I actually seriously considered for some time before noticing that 55...♕c3+ 56.♔b6 ♕c6+ 57.♔a7 ♕a6+! loses all the pawns with check. **55...♕c3+ 56.♔xd5 ♕b3+ 57.♔e4 ♕b1+ 58.♔e5 ♕e1+ 59.♔d5 ♕h1+ 60.♔e6** And with the checks finally running out, Black resigned.

Middlegame

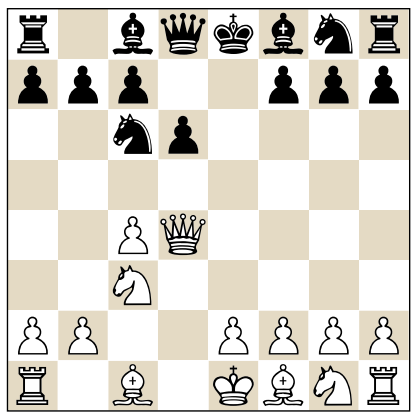
In Round 7, I was to play Shakhriyar Mamedyarov with the white pieces. Shakhriyar is one week younger than me, so we had met in many a World/European junior event from an early age. He usually won them with huge scores and with his trademark brutal attacking chess. It came as no surprise to me that he developed into the world top player that he is today. Nevertheless I decided to appear at the board!

EO 21.4 – A41
Erwin l'Ami
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Reykjavik 2015 (7)

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5

I had not expected this particular line, but I had some idea what I was supposed to do here, so the surprise surely was not an unpleasant one.

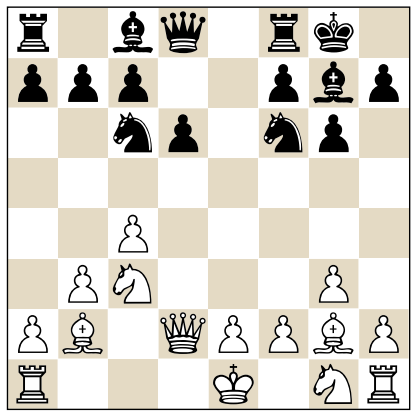
3.♘c3 exd4 4.♕xd4 ♘c6



Black voluntarily gives up the centre with 3...exd4, but is then allowed to develop with tempo. Since the knight is not that well placed on c6 in this structure, I believe this trade-off favours White.

5.♕d2 This may look a bit odd, but since the dark-squared bishop is going to be developed to b2, d2 is the best square for the queen.

5...g6 6.b3 ♗g7 7.♗b2 ♘f6 8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2



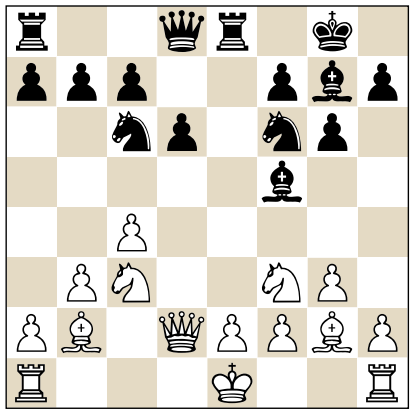
9...♖e8

This has all been seen before, but there are some subtleties at this point. If Black starts with 9...♗f5, there is 10.♘h3! ♖e8 11.♘f4, and with the knight coming to d5, this is very unpleasant for Black.

10.♘f3

Now the desirable 10.♘h3 would run into 10...d5!, when 11.♘xd5 (11.cxd5 ♗xh3 12.♗xh3 ♘xd5 completely frees Black's game) 11...♗xh3 12.♗xh3 ♘e4 13.♕c2 ♘d4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.0-0-0 ♗g7 smells a bit with that long diagonal wide open and …c7–c6 coming.

10...♗f5



11.♘h4! Timman's move. The meek 11.0-0 ♘e4 is not a serious test.

11...♗d7

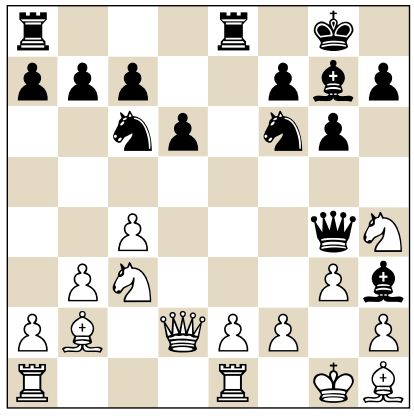
After 11...♘e4 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4, 13.f3! is the point of White's 11th move. The stem game continued: 11...♕d7 12.♘xf5 ♕xf5 13.0-0, and the bishop pair secured White a very comfortable advantage in Timman-Cuijpers, Hilversum 1983.

Alternatively, 11...♗e6 12.0-0 a5 was how MVL handled this position against... my wife! But here, too, I believe 13.♖ac1 (defending against 13...a4 14.♘xa4 ♗xc4) gives White a pleasant edge.

12.0-0 ♕c8 13.♖fe1

A typical move for keeping the bishops on the board.

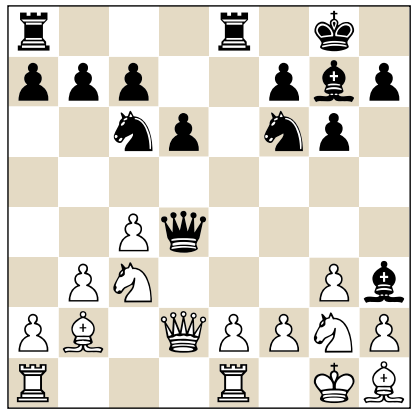
13...♗h3 14.♗h1 ♕g4



It is a bit scary if one of the strongest attacking players in the world throws his pieces towards your king, but here I assured myself that it couldn't amount to much. White is just too solid.

15.♘g2 I played this without much hesitation, since the knight was begging to be removed from h4.

15...♕d4



16.♖ad1 Too timid, although it all works out splendidly in the game. Much stronger is 16.♕c1!, and with both knight jumps to f4 and, more importantly, d5 in the air, Black is in serious trouble. The tactical justification is 16...♘e4 17.♘d1! ♕d2 (or 17...♕c5 18.♘f4 ♗f5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♘e3, with a huge positional advantage) 18.♕xd2 ♘xd2 19.♘f4! (19.♗xg7

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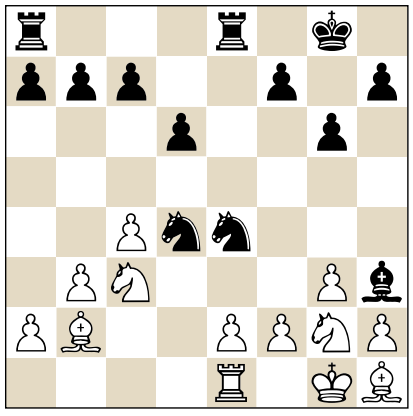
allows the very pretty 19...♖xe2! 20.♖xe2 ♘f3+ 21.♔f1 ♘xh2+, with perpetual check!) 19...♗f5 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♘c3, with a near-decisive advantage in the endgame.

16...♘e4 True to his style, Shakhriyar is still trying to create play. Instead, 16...♕xd2 17.♖xd2 was the realistic approach, when White has the somewhat more pleasant endgame.

17.♕xd4 ♗xd4 18.♖xd4! ♘xd4

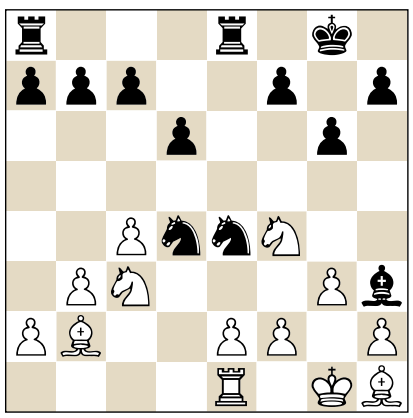


19.♘f4

I must have checked and rechecked this around 453 times before venturing to pick up the knight.

19.♘xe4 ♖xe4 20.♘f4 ♖xf4 21.gxf4 ♘c6 lets Black off the hook, although even here White has a pleasant advantage.

However, 19.♘d5 may have been even stronger than the game continuation. As it hits both the knight on d4 and the c7–pawn, Black's reply is obviously 19...♘e6, but here 20.♘gf4 (20.f3 c6!) 20...♘xf4 21.♘xf4 keeps the pressure on, e.g. 21...♗f5 22.♘d5 (always this square!) 22...♖ac8 23.♗xe4 ♖xe4 24.♘f6+ ♔f8 25.♘xh7+ ♔e7 26.f3, etc.



19...♘g5?

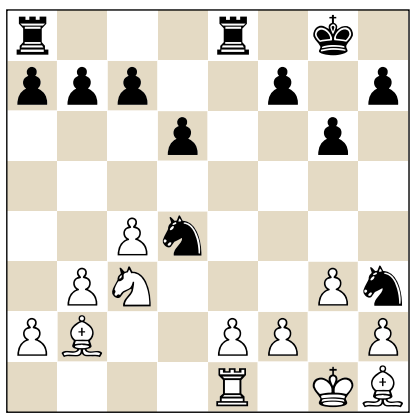
ALINA L'AMI

Let the game begin! Despite Shakhriyar Mamedyarov's world-class ranking, Erwin l'Ami decided to appear at the board.

Here 19...♘xc3 20.♗xc3 g5! was a resource that completely escaped me during the game. Black indirectly defends both hanging pieces because 21.♘xh3 (White should take the other piece with 21.♗xd4 gxf4 22.♗xb7 ♖ad8 23.f3! – not 23.gxf4 ♖e6!, when the rooks start working – 23...fxg3 24.hxg3 ♗c8!, and although this is obviously very pleasant for White, it is very far from winning) 21...♘xe2+ 22.♖xe2 ♖xe2 23.♘xg5 ♖c2 24.♗d4 h6 25.♘f3 ♖xa2 is already dangerous for White.

20.♘xh3 ♘xh3+

20...♘gf3+ 21.♔f1! ♘xe1 22.♔xe1 was the very gloomy alternative. ♘e4 is coming with devastating effect.



21.♔f1 I very much liked this quiet move. Here Black resigned.

Certainly earlier than I had expected, but it is true that 21...c6 (21...♘g5 22.♘d5! or 21...♘e6 22.♗xb7 ♖ab8 23.♗g2 ♘hg5 24.h4!) 22.♘e4 ♖xe4 23.♗xe4 ♘g5 24.♗g2 ♘f5 25.♖d1 will win White the d-pawn after a further e4 and f4, when the endgame should be technically winning.

After this win I suddenly found myself in the sole lead, and I guess it was at this point that it also started to dawn on me that this could become a very special tournament. Such thoughts, it must be said, are very dangerous and should be kept under lock and key! It starts with the social media. On Facebook and Twitter congrats started pouring in after this victory. In order not to get overexcited I decided to close down all modern technology and ignore incoming messages. As for the tournament, I tried to use Gelfand's method: not thinking of the standings and just playing game by game (easier said than done!).

Endgame

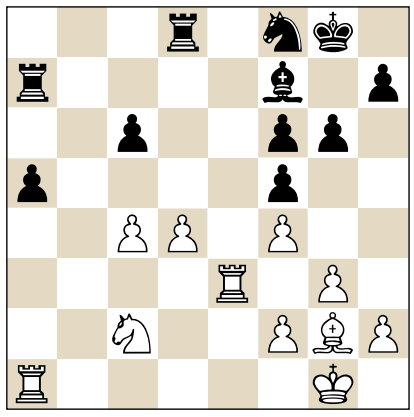
The toughest game was without a doubt the one against Julio Granda Zuniga. The sympathetic Peruvian is a 'natural', who refrains from extensive opening work but rather relies on the strength of his own ideas and moves. He's had a very successful career which, at the current age of 48,

Reykjavik 2015

1	Erwin l'Ami	NED	2605	8½
2	Pavel Eljanov	UKR	2727	8
3	Fabien Libiszewski	FRA	2514	8
4	Alexandr Fier	BRA	2601	7½
5	Daniel Naroditsky	USA	2633	7½
6	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2756	7½
7	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2676	7½
8	Eric Hansen	CAN	2566	7½
9	Jon Ludvig Hammer	NOR	2651	7½
10	Abhijeet Gupta	IND	2625	7½
11	Hannes Stefansson	ISL	2560	7½
12	Henrik Danielsen	ISL	2514	7½
13	Artur Jussupow	GER	2573	7½
14	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2603	7½
15	Rui Gao	CHN	2533	7
16	Julio Granda Zuniga	PER	2646	7
17	Hjorvar Steinn Gretarsson	ISL	2554	7
18	Gawain Jones	ENG	2642	7
19	Sebastien Mazé	FRA	2564	7
20	Yaacov Norowitz	USA	2422	7
21	Sahaj Grover	IND	2519	7
22	Pouya Idani	IRI	2496	7
23	Sarasadat Khademalsharieh	IRI	2357	7
24	Matthieu Cornette	FRA	2585	7
25	Jean-Pierre Le Roux	FRA	2548	7
26	Axel Rombaldoni	ITA	2488	7
27	Sergei Movsesian	ARM	2665	7
28	Justin Sarkar	USA	2376	7
29	Tibor Kende Antal	HUN	2317	7
30	Jonas Rosner	GER	2324	7
31	Oliver Johannesson	ISL	2212	7
32	David Navara	CZE	2736	6½
33	Zbigniew Pakleza	POL	2498	6½
34	Nico Georgiadis	SUI	2468	6½
35	Hedinn Steingrimsson	ISL	2530	6½
36	Yiye Wang	CHN	2433	6½
37	Zhansaya Abdumalik	KAZ	2379	6½
38	Allan Stig Rasmussen	DEN	2532	6½
39	Nikita Petrov	RUS	2435	6½
40	Johan-Sebastian Christiansen	NOR	2351	6½
41	Tania Sachdev	IND	2404	6½
42	Stefan Kristjansson	ISL	2482	6½
43	Razvan Preotu	CAN	2447	6½
44	Vladimir Hamitevici	MDA	2450	6½
45	Alexandre Vuilleumier	SUI	2349	6½
46	Alina l'Ami	ROU	2393	6½
47	Bjorn Ahlander	SWE	2380	6½
48	Dagur Arngrimsson	ISL	2366	6½
49	Cristina-Adela Foisor	ROU	2394	6½
50	Askell Karason	ISL	2274	6½

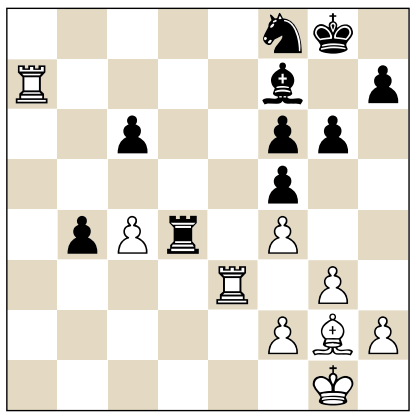
274 players, 10 rounds

is still very much ongoing. In the 2013 World Cup in Tromsø he eliminated both Peter Leko and Anish Giri!

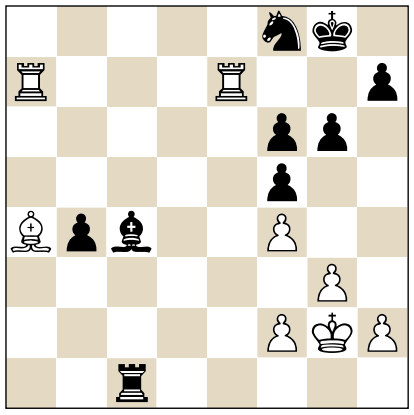


Granda Zuniga-L'Ami
Reykjavik 2015 (8)
position after 29...♗f7

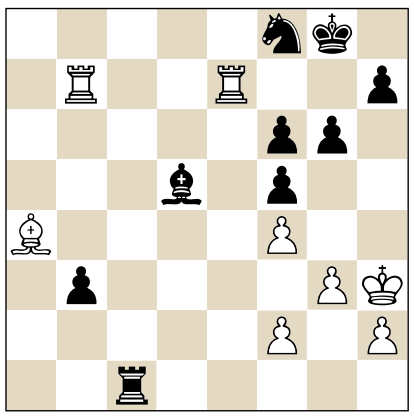
I had been confidently outplayed by my experienced opponent and in the diagrammed position Julio starts reaping the rewards with: **30.♘b4!** Decisive. It should be noted though that we were getting considerably low on time at this point. **30...axb4** I didn't see a worthy alternative. **31.♖xa7 ♖xd4**



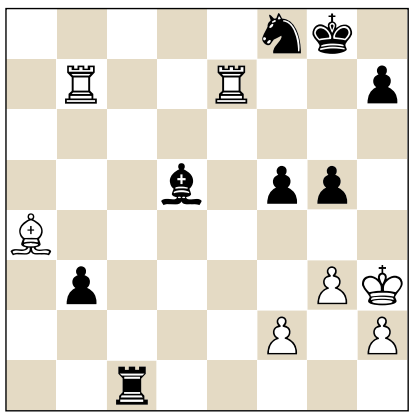
32.♗xc6 Especially given the upcoming time-scramble, White could have made things a lot easier with 32.♗f1!?, preparing to double on the 7th, while 32...♗xc4 33.♗xc4+ ♖xc4 34.♖e8 b3 35.♖b8 is just lost. **32...♖xc4 33.♖ee7 ♖c1+ 34.♔g2 ♗c4** Suddenly creating a few threats! **35.♗a4?**
Played with just seconds left. The only thing preventing us from losing on time at this point was the 30-second increment. Here 35.♔h3! is strong, allowing the c6–bishop to intervene nicely on g2 after a check on f1.



35...b3! Run! **36.♖ab7 ♗d5+ 37.♔h3** 37.f3 ♗xb7 38.♗xb3+ ♔h8 39.♖xb7 ♖b1! would lead to a draw.

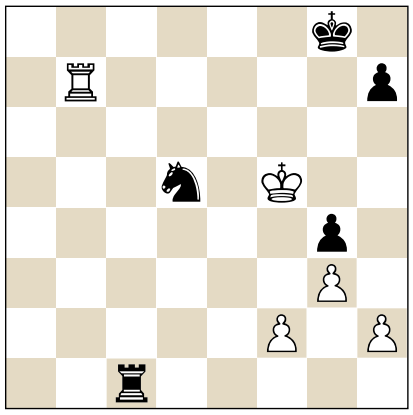


37...g5!? Trying to keep the game going! Suddenly the white king is under fire. **38.fxg5** 38.f3! would have forced 38...♗xb7, with a draw. 38.♗xb3 g4+ 39.♔h4 ♘g6+! (not 39...♗xb3 40.♔h5! ♖h1 41.h4!!) 40.♔h5 ♘xe7 leaves Black a full piece up. **38...fxg5**



39.♗xb3? There was one last narrow path to a draw: 39.♗e8 ♖g1 40.♗f7+ ♗xf7 41.♖xf7 b2 42.♖g7+ ♔h8 43.♖gf7!, and now Black should agree to move repetition with 43...♔g8 44.♖g7+, since 43...g4+ 44.♔h4 ♘g6+ (44...♔g8!) 45.♔g5 b1♕ 46.♖xh7+ ♔g8 47.♔xg6! is even losing!

39...g4+ 40.♔h4 ♘g6+ 41.♔g5 ♘xe7 42.♗xd5+ ♘xd5 43.♔xf5



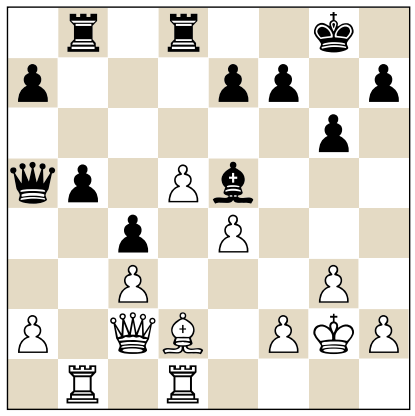
And with the dust settled there remains an endgame that I would estimate as winning for Black. A few hours later I indeed managed to prove that!

Having a game flip your way like that is of course essential in winning an event like this one. Since the competition had all drawn their games, I had now taken a full-point lead with just two rounds to go. Would I be able to keep the lead and... No, don't think about it!

Round 9 saw me paired against Hrant Melkumyan. Hrant has been working as a second for Levon Aronian and has made a huge jump in the past year, currently holding a pretty serious rating of 2676. Working as a second is an interesting job. I did the same from 2008 to 2011 for Veselin Topalov. I'm often asked how incredibly much I must have learned from this experience (chess-wise), but chess has changed a lot and so has the job of a second. Yasser Seirawan once told me stories about his experiences as a second to Viktor Kortchnoi. Without any computers around yet, the two would set up the board and pieces and analyse and exchange ideas for hours on end, which was of course hugely beneficial for Yasser's chess understanding. That still happens to some extent, but nowadays computers have taken over, which means that the board has been mostly replaced by the screen and there is less direct contact between player and second. Modern seconds are like IT-specialists who spend most of their time trying to persuade the engine to move in certain directions. From the Anand-Topalov World Championship match I remember losing a lot of sleep because the computer kept showing +0.30 in a certain Catalan line, while we were determined to get it back to 0.00! Therefore the lessons I took from my time working with Topalov were, I believe, much less connected to chess than to his approach to the game. Here is a player who fights to the bitter end and lives his life in such a way that everything is in place to allow him to achieve his goals. I think it was important for me to witness that up close, and it surely helped me a lot. But I digress!

'The lessons I took from my time working with Topalov were, I believe, much less connected to chess than to his approach to the game.'

When Hrant went for the Grünfeld Defence, I tried to surprise him with the ♖b1 line, but as it turned out I surprised myself when my opponent chose a set-up he had not used before. And indeed, after 20 moves I was slightly worse without much promise of counterplay.



L'Ami-Melkumyan
Reykjavik 2015 (9)
position after 19...♖ab8

20.♗f4 Here 20.f4 was suggested, but after 20...♗g7 21.♗e1 a6 White's centre is very vulnerable. Black is ready to double on the d-file and another

ALINA L'AMI

Lost in thought, Julio Granda strolls along the futuristic windows of Harpa, the spectacular concert hall next to the harbour that was once again the venue of the Reykjavik Open.

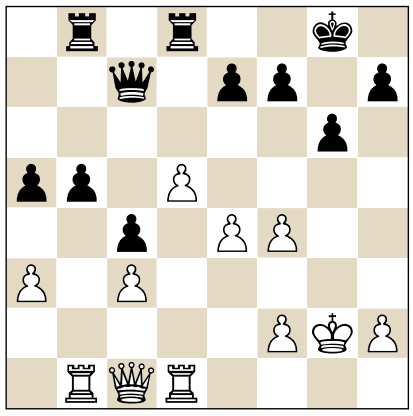
important point is that 22.e5 is solidly met by 22...f6! 23.e6 f5!, when White is in trouble. I decided to remove the strong bishop from e5, even at the cost of somewhat ruining my structure.

20...♗xf4

The exchange sac 20...♗xc3 21.♗xb8 ♖xb8 would be interesting if Black had a bit more time, but here 22.d6! gives White immediate counterplay.

21.gxf4 ♕c7 22.♕c1 Unfortunately, I can't push the e-pawn, because 22.e5 ♕b7 23.♕e4 e6! loses a pawn.

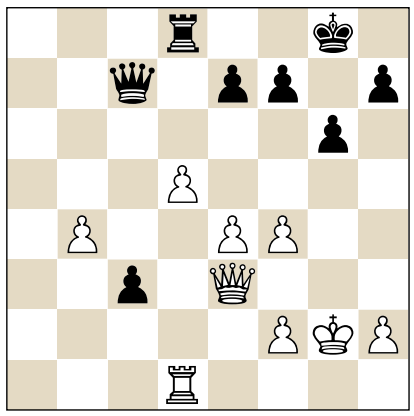
22...a5 23.a3



23...b4?! Too hasty. During the game I thought 23...♕c5 24.♕e3 ♕xa3 25.♖a1 ♕d6 26.♖xa5 b4 27.cxb4 ♖xb4 would still be a bit unpleasant for White, with ...♖b3 coming. The computer is not impressed, though.

24.axb4 axb4 25.♖xb4 ♖xb4 26.cxb4 c3 27.♕e3

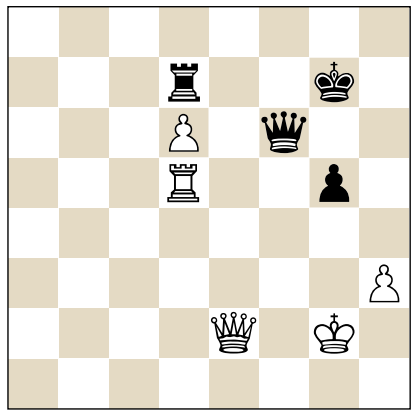
Now Black has to take care. I just want to play ♖c1 and follow it up by pushing my b-pawn.



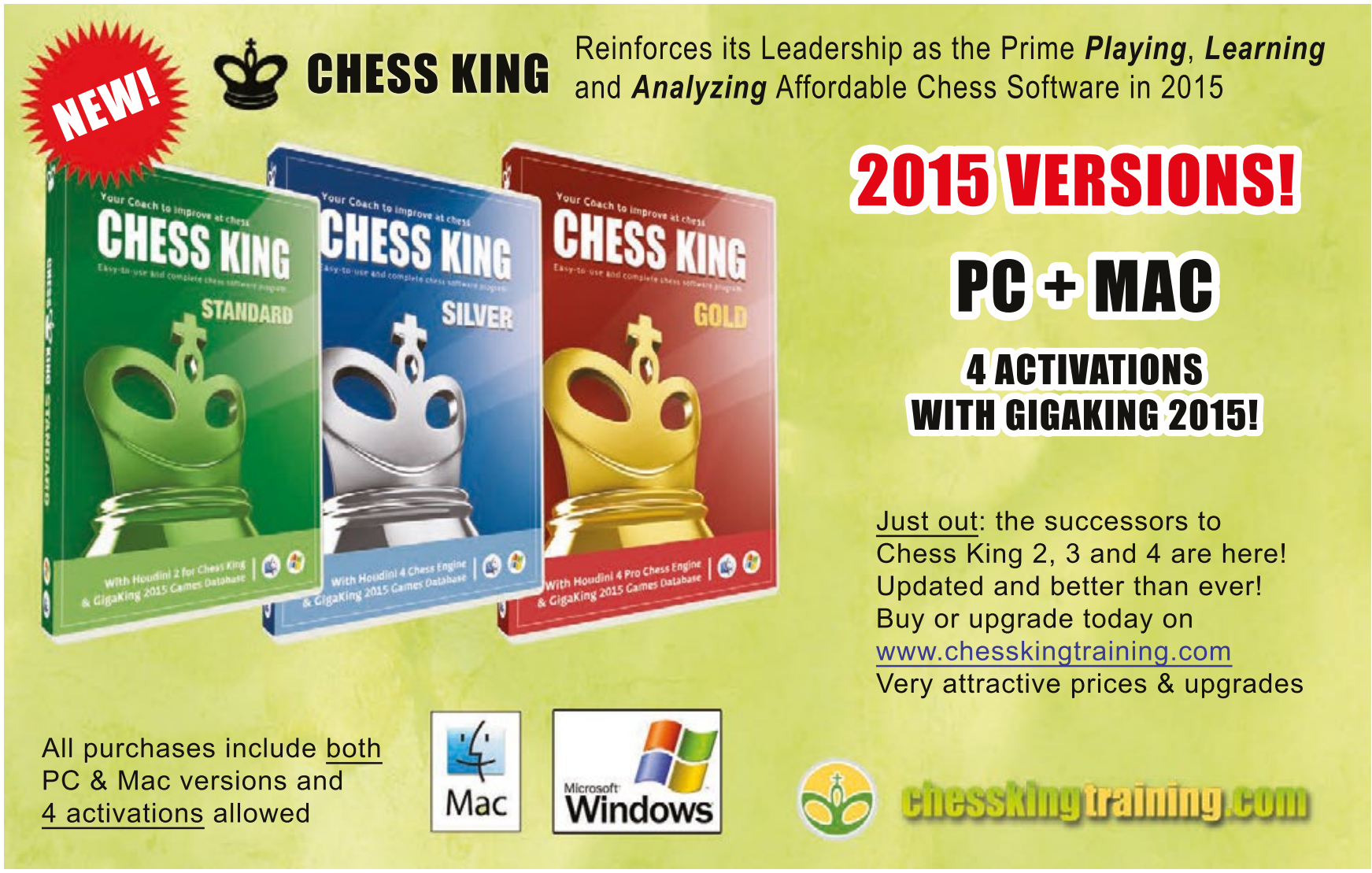
27...♖b8? 27...♕c4 28.♖c1 ♖c8 29.b5 f5! should hold.

28.♖c1 c2 29.♕d2 ♕c4 30.♕xc2 ♕xb4 31.♕d3

With a healthy extra pawn. Since I doubt the editor wants me to fill up the entire magazine, we now take a small jump.



With both players playing on increments again, we were up for a nice final. What I was not aware of at this point is that all my rivals had drawn their games, which meant a win would guarantee first place. Perhaps it's good I didn't know that. Having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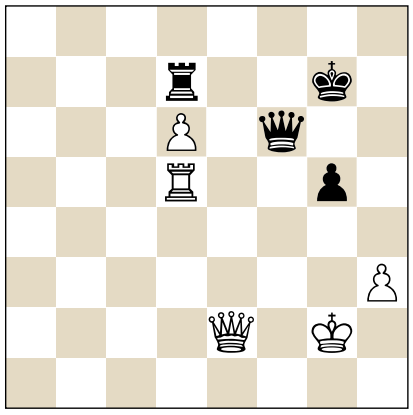
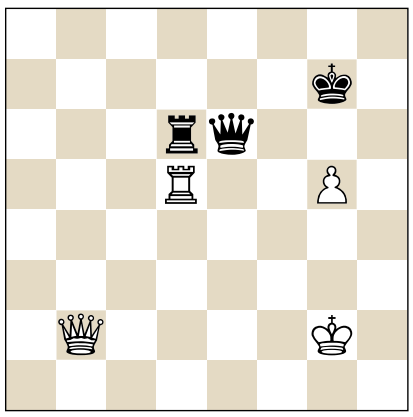
ALINA L'AMI

Gunnar Björnsson, the President of the Icelandic Chess Federation, with the top three finishers: Fabien Libiszewsky (3), Erwin l'Ami (1) and Pavel Eljanov (2).

moved back and forth for a number of moves I finally decided to take the plunge and go:



62.h4!? ♖**xd6** 62...gxh4 would lose a rook. **63.hxg5** ♕**e6 64.** ♕**b2+**



64...♔**f7**

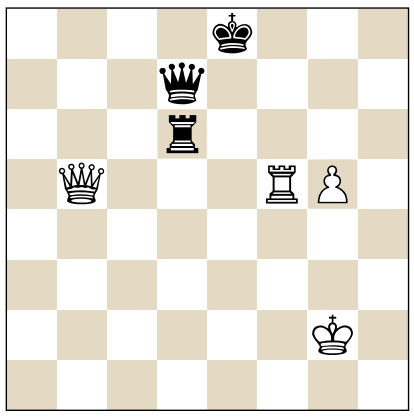
There is a funny story here. After the game I went to dinner with my wife and we discussed the game. She wondered why 64...♔h7 had not been played. Both my opponent and I had fallen for the optical illusion that I would somehow zigzag my queen to c7, but after 65.♕b1+ (or 65.♕c2+ ♔g8) 65...♔g7 it would never get there and the game is just drawn. That's what time-trouble does to you!

65. ♕**b7+** ♕**e7** 65...♔g6 66.♕b1+ ♔g7 is drawn, as mentioned above.

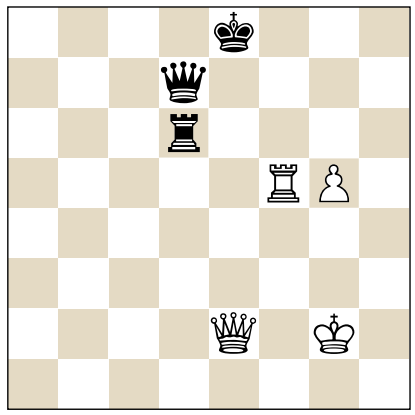
66. ♖**f5+!** ♔**e8 67.** ♕**b8+**

67.♕c8+ ♕d8 68.♕c4 is the computer suggestion. I doubt I would have found that even with 2.5 hours on my clock.

67... ♕**d8 68.** ♕**b5+** ♕**d7 69.** ♕**b8+** ♕**d8 70.** ♕**b5+** ♕**d7**



71. ♕**e2+!** 71.♕xd7+ ♖xd7 72.♔g3 ♖f7 would secure the draw for Black – he gets his king in front of the pawn. In the game I try to get the king further away from it in order for the rook ending to be winning.



71...♔**d8** After 71...♖e6 my thoughts went along the lines of: I have a check on h5 now and afterwards a check on f8 or h8. Should be fine!

72.♕h5+ ♔d8 73.♕h8+ ♔c7 74.♕c3+ ♔d8 75.♖f8+ ♔e7 76.♕g7+ ♔d6 77.♕d4+ does indeed win!

72. ♖**f8+** ♔**c7 73.** ♕**c4+** ♖**c6** Here 73...♕c6+ 74.♕xc6+ ♔xc6 75.♔g3 is already an elementary win. **74.** ♕**f4+** ♕**d6 75.** ♔**g3** ♔**d7 76.** ♕**xd6+** ♖**xd6 77.** ♔**g4** The rest is easy.

77...♔**e7 78.** ♖**f1** ♖**d8 79.** ♔**h5** ♖**g8 80.** ♔**h6** Black resigned.

People started congratulating me, which was nice, but I also found it slightly annoying. After all, there was one more hugely important game to play. However, when Peter Doggers informed me that my lead had grown to 1½ points, I suddenly understood what had happened ☺.

I would have liked the tournament and my impressions to end right here. First place, 8½ out of 9, performance 2951. Not bad.

But there still was a 10th round! Playing White against Pavel Eljanov, I wanted to finish the tournament on a high note, but it was not to be. Did the tournament victory get to my head? Perhaps. But Eljanov is a world-class player, and when I played inaccurately on move 25 he punished me ruthlessly. Pretty annoying to see a streak end in that way, but when, later that day, I was awarded the winner's trophy, that feeling soon vanished. How could it be otherwise? These were indeed the best two weeks of my chess career! ■

How the United States Olympic Teams Became More International

Speculation has been rife that Fabiano Caruana, who has dual Italian and American citizenship, might switch from playing for Italy to representing the United States, particularly in the Olympiads. In recent years, American teams have often relied on immigrants, so a move by Caruana would not be unprecedented. If it happens, Caruana could join Hikaru Nakamura and Wesley So, another recent transfer, to give the United States its best chance in decades to win the gold medal. The following chart shows the history of United States teams in the Olympiads. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

● Born in the United States or emigrated to it as a child (before age 18).
● Emigrated to the United States after age 18.
G Individual gold medal
S Individual silver medal
B Individual bronze medal

Years*		Team place (medal)	Team members, in board order**
1928	The Hague, the Netherlands	2nd	G ● ● ●
1930	Hamburg, Germany	6th	B ● ● ● ●
1931	Prague, Czech Republic	1st	B ● ● ● S
1933	Folkestone, England	1st	S G S S ●
1935	Warsaw, Poland	1st	● ● B G G ●
1937	Stockholm, Sweden	1st	● G G ● G
1950	Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia	4th	B ● ● ● B G
1952	Helsinki, Finland	5th	● ● B ● ● ●
1958	Munich, Germany	4th	● ● ● S B
1960	Leipzig, Germany	2nd	B ● S ● ● ●
1962	Varna, Bulgaria	4th	● S ● ● S ●
1964	Tel Aviv, Israel	6th	● ● ● ● ● ●
1966	Havana, Cuba	2nd	S ● ● ● ● ●
1968	Lugano, Switzerland	4th	● ● ● ● ● B
1970	Siegen, Germany	4th	S ● ● ● ● G
1972	Skopje, Macedonia	9th	● ● ● ● ● ●
1974	Nice, France	3rd	● ● ● ● ● G
1976	Haifa, Israel***	1st	● ● B ● S G
1978	Buenos Aires, Argentina	3rd	● ● ● ● G ●
1980	La Valletta, Malta	4th	● S ● ● ● ●
1982	Lucerne, Switzerland	3rd	● ● ● ● B ●
1984	Thessaloniki, Greece	3rd	● ● ● ● ● B
1986	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	3rd	● ● ● ● ● B
1988	Thessaloniki, Greece	4th	● ● ● ● ● ●
1990	Novi Sad, Yugoslavia	2nd	● ● ● ● ● ●
1992	Manila, Philippines	4th	● ● ● ● ● ●
1994	Moscow, Russia	7th	● ● ● G ● ●
1996	Yerevan, Armenia	3rd	● S ● ● ● ●
1998	Elista, Russia	2nd	● ● B ● ● ●
2000	Istanbul, Turkey	26th	● ● ● ● ● ●
2002	Bled, Slovenia	41st	● S ● ● ● ●
2004	Calvia, Spain	4th	● ● ● S ● ●
2006	Turin, Italy	3rd	● ● ● ● ● ●
2008	Dresden, Germany	3rd	● ● ● ● ●
2010	Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia	9th	● ● ● ● ●
2012	Istanbul, Turkey	5th	● B ● ● ●
2014	Tromsø, Norway	14th	● ● ● ● G

The golden age of United States teams. Led by Isaac Kashdan and Frank J. Marshall, the U.S. champion from 1909 to 1936, and also including Reuben Fine, Arthur Dake and I.A. Horowitz, the home-grown squads dominated the early Olympiads, winning four consecutive team gold medals (and taking home a bunch of individual awards as well).

The rise of Bobby Fischer and William Lombardy at the head of a new generation of American players seemed to herald a new era for the United States. The American team was also bolstered by the arrival from Hungary of Pal Benko, a world-championship caliber player, who played on the United States team from 1962 to 1972. But, despite two silver medals, and three fourth-place finishes in 1962, 1968 and 1970, the United States could not break the Soviet hegemony.

Pal Benko

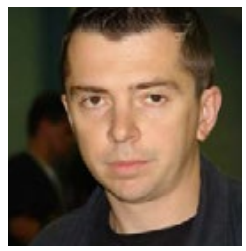
A generation of American players inspired by Fischer – notably Yasser Seirawan, Larry Christiansen and Nick de Firmian – and the addition of some top Eastern Bloc emigres – Lubomir Kavalek from what was then Czechoslovakia and Lev Albert from the Ukraine – consistently placed the United States among the top three teams in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Lubomir Kavalek

Boris Gulko, the former Soviet champion and prominent Soviet Refusenik, was a significant addition to the American team in 1988. He played in every Olympiad for the Americans through 2004.

Boris Gulko

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a large influx of Eastern European grandmasters in the United States. That dramatically reshaped the national team, as often more than half the players were from former Soviet republics. The trend reached its zenith in 2004, with an all ex-Soviet team of Gulko, Alexander Shabalov, Gregory Kaidanov, Alexander Onischuk, Alexander Goldin and Igor Novikov. Onischuk is the lone member of that group who has continued to play in international team competitions for the United States.



Alexander Onischuk

**The United States did not send a team to the first official Olympiad in London in 1927 nor to the alternate one in 1936 in Nazi-controlled Germany. There were also no American teams sent to the Olympiads in Buenos Aires in 1939, in Amsterdam in 1954 and in Moscow in 1956.*
***The board orders for 1980 and 1992 are uncertain, though Yasser Seirawan did win the silver on Board 2 in 1980.*
****The Olympiad in Haifa was boycotted by the teams from the Eastern Bloc, considerably weakening the field.*

Fair & Square

Mal Peet: 'Football is a bit like chess: it's not just the piece being moved that matters, it's also the effect that move has on all the other pieces.' *(The Carnegie medal-winning children's author of football novels such as Keeper, The Penalty and Exposure, who died recently)*

Wilhelm Steinitz: 'Chess is a scientific game and its literature ought to be placed on the basis of the strictest truthfulness, which is the foundation of all scientific research.'

Nicolas Rossolimo: 'America, I decided, is a better country for my wife, a better country for my son. A better country for everyone but chess players.' *(The Ukrainian-born GM in a New York Times feature in 1958 on why he became a taxi driver)*

Richard Feynman: 'To try to get some idea of what we're doing here to try to understand nature is to imagine that the gods are playing some great game like chess. Let's say a chess game. And you don't know the rules of the game, but you're allowed to look at the board from time to time, in a little corner, perhaps. And from these observations, you try to figure out what the rules are of the game, what [are] the rules of the pieces moving.' *(The Nobel laureate trying to explain science)*

Andrew Rawnsley: 'In the estimation of his fans, he's the Tory grandmaster of strategy, the man who is always four moves ahead of his opponents. I've never really understood how George Osborne, more of a dice-throwing politician than a chess-playing one, managed to acquire this image.' *(The Observer's award-winning chief political commentator on the British Chancellor of the Exchequer)*

Mikhail Tal: 'Preparing for a game with Larsen is a matter which is either too complicated, or too simple. The Dane's repertoire contains practically all opening systems, and one's chances of guessing the variation are no better than in a lottery. Therefore at home it was decided to begin the game with the advance of the king's pawn. At that the preparation came to an end…'

William Hartston: 'A game to subdue the turbulent spirit, or to worry a tranquil mind.' *(In The Kings of Chess, London, 1985)*

Roy Keane: 'When you are having games and there are places up for grabs players are going to get knocks in training. It's not chess we're playing.' *(Ireland's assistant football manager, speaking ahead of his team's Euro 2016 qualifier against Poland)*

Viktor Kortchnoi: 'Fischer is not crazy as people say. He simply failed to keep up normal relations.'

William Hazlitt: 'A great chess player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it.'

Gavin Larsen: 'Martin [Crowe] was a superb tactician. He was very shrewd. I can call him a chess Grand Master and I was one of his chess pieces.' *(The former New Zealand bowler, during the recent Cricket World Cup in Australia & New Zealand, praising the leadership skills of his former Kiwi captain)*

Olimpiu G. Urcan: 'The joys of being a chess master: having your play discussed at Chessgames.com, your results and everything else commented upon by Mark Crowther, your books reviewed by John Elburg and Sean Marsh, your writings stolen by Raymond Keene, and your obituary written by the *British Chess Magazine*.'
(The Singapore-based chess historian in his blog)

Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown: '[The Russians] are playing a very dangerous game of chess… We should still go up and pursue them to let them know we are playing the same game of chess.' *(The world's greatest test pilot – aged 96 – on two Russian long-range bombers caught again violating British airspace)*

Walter Browne: 'Chess is a natural cerebral high.'

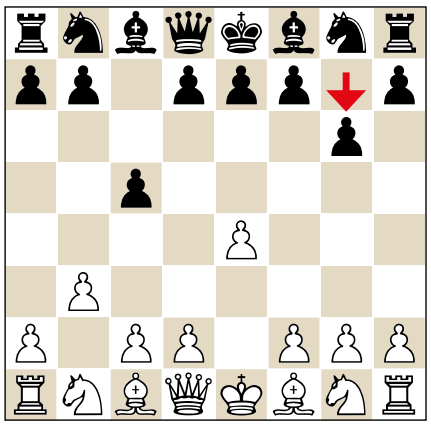
Dan Snow: 'In battle [Napoleon] sacrificed men like a chess master does his pawns. He abandoned his own army in the depths of a Russian winter; in Egypt he bolted, leaving another entire army to rot.' *(The English historian, writing in The Sunday Telegraph, ahead of the upcoming bicentenary in June of the Battle of Waterloo)*

'He who watches in silence a game of chess is truly a princely man.' *(Chinese proverb)*

Albert Einstein: 'Chess holds its master in its own bonds, shackling the mind and brain so that the inner freedom of the very strongest must suffer.'

Provocation on the long diagonal

Jeroen Bosch



2...g6!?

'Wouldn't it be so much more fun to surprise your opponent with the cheekiest answer available?'

1.e4 c5 2.b3 This is one of the many sidelines against the Sicilian that have a right to exist. While admittedly only the open Sicilian and the ♗b5(+) lines should worry Black theoretically, it can be tough in practice to meet the queen's fianchetto. Indeed in the SOS-series Arthur Kogan advocated 2.b3 as a surprise weapon, dubbing it the Czerniak Attack (SOS-9, 2008), while pointing out that, apart from the Israeli IM, 2.b3 has been played by the likes of Spassky, Short, Morozevich and Aronian. Meanwhile the names of Kramnik and Carlsen may be added to the list of those who have been happy to adopt 2.b3. If you are not prepared for this line things may quickly go wrong, as two Dutch grandmasters found out to their detriment:

– 2...♘c6 3.♗b2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♘f3 d6 6.♗c4 dxe5 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.♗xe5 e6 9.♘c3 ♘xc3 10.♗xc3 ♗d7 11.0–0 and Black had developmental problems due to White's raking bishops in Spassky-Sosonko, Tilburg 1978.

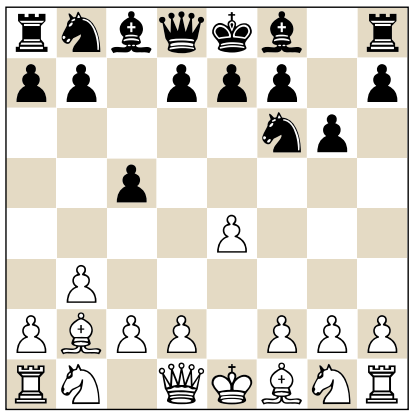
– 2...d6 3.♗b2 ♘f6 4.♗b5+ ♗d7 5.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 6.d3 ♘c6 7.f4 d5 8.♘d2 0-0-0 9.♕e2 dxe4 10.dxe4 ♘d4 11.♗xd4! ♕xd4 12.♖d1 ♕c3 13.♘f3 ♕xc2 14.♘g5! with an edge in Mamedyarov-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

There is of course nothing wrong with such natural moves as 2...♘c6 or 2...d6. However, wouldn't it be so much more fun to surprise your opponent with the cheekiest answer available?

2...g6!? An impudent reply, but one that has been played by 'serious guys' such as Ivanchuk, Navara, McShane, Nepomniachtchi and Peter Heine Nielsen. The latter has made a strong case for 2...g6 in an excellent article in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian* (Quality Chess, 2011).

In recent years Nielsen's optimistic conclusions have largely been confirmed. So, thumbs up for shock and objective value of 2...g6!.

3.♗b2 ♘f6



The main reply now is 4.e5, but 4.♘c3 is also played, while it is telling that 4.♕f3 is actually even more popular than the knight move. You may wonder about the weakness of square d5 after 4.♗xf6, which is why we will examine this too.

We will deal with the minor alternatives first before presenting the variations in the order of increasing popularity.

– 4.c4 d6 5.g3 is not really in the spirit

of 2.b3, after 5...♗g7 6.♗g2 ♘c6 7.♘e2 Black can have fun with 7...h5 8.h3 ♗d7, or play healthy positional chess with 7...♗g4 8.h3 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘d7 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7 12.f4 ♘d4 13.♕d3 ♘b8! 14.♘c3 ♘bc6 with a slight edge for Black in M.Socko-Daulyte, Germany Bundesliga 2014/15.

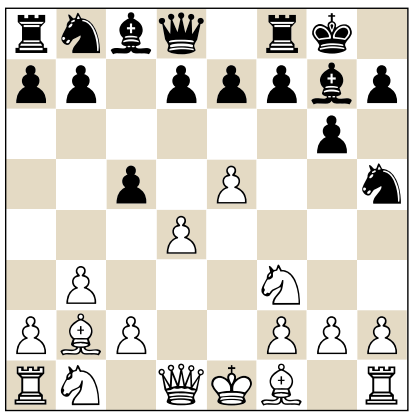
– 4.f4 ♗g7 5.e5 ♘d5 6.♕f3 ♘b4 7.♘a3, Stenzel-De Freitas, Sao Paulo 1964, and now 7...0-0 8.c3 ♘4c6 followed by ...d6 gives Black the more harmonious game.

– Nothing is given by 4.♗c4 d6 (4...♗g7!? 5.e5 ♘e4 6.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 7.♕f3+ ♔g8 8.♕xe4 d5 and Black has decent compensation for the pawn) 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♖e1 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♗g4 9.h3, Kr.Georgiev-Videnova, Plovdiv 2011, and now the consistent 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 is at least equal for Black.

– 4.h4 is in the spirit of 2.b3. White is aiming to use his pressure along the diagonal by combining it with a flank attack. 4...♘c6 (4...♗g7; White is better following 4...h5?! 5.e5 ♘g4 6.e6! f6 7.♗d3) 5.h5 d6 6.♗b5 (6.hxg6 fxg6 7.♘f3 ♗g7) 6...e5 (6...♗h6!?) 7.hxg6 fxg6 8.♘c3 ♗g7 9.♕e2 a6 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 11.0-0-0 0-0 was pretty unclear in Motylev-Potkin, Yaroslavl rapid 2014. White won, but at present Black is certainly no worse.

– 4.g4 has never been played, and perhaps rightly so. After 4...♗g7 (4...h6) 5.g5 ♘h5 6.♗xg7 ♘xg7 White has mainly created weaknesses for himself.

– More serious is 4.♘f3 ♗g7 (4...d6 is also fine) 5.e5 ♘h5!?. This may look odd, but is actually a good move. Pawn e5 is weak, and the knight on h5 may return into the game via f4. 6.d4 0-0!? (6...cxd4)



– 7.♕c1?! d6 8.h3 cxd4 9.g4 ♕a5+ (9...dxe5 10.gxh5 e4 11.♘fd2 e3! favours Black) 10.c3 ♕d5 11.♗e2 d3 was much better for Black in Najdorf-L. Bronstein, Buenos Aires 1975.

– 7.♕d2 d6 8.h3 dxe5 9.dxe5 ♕xd2+ 10.♘bxd2 ♘c6 11.0-0-0 b6 12.♗d3 ♗b7 with an even game in Ftacnik-Danek, Frenstat 1982.

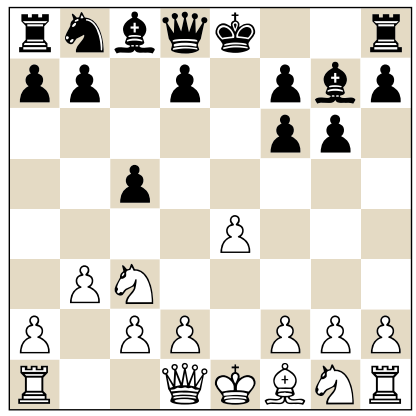
Variation A – 4.♗xf6
Variation B – 4.♘c3
Variation C – 4.♕f3
Variation D – 4.e5

Variation A

4.♗xf6

Giving up the bishop for a square – you may be reminded of Karpov-Browne, San Antonio 1972, which started 1.c4 c5 2.b3 ♘f6 3.♗b2 g6 4.♗xf6!?.

4...exf6 5.♘c3 ♗g7



6.♗c4

Or 6.♗d3 0-0 7.f4?! f5 8.exf5 d5 9.fxg6 hxg6 10.♘ge2 ♕h4+ and Black had excellent compensation in Aubel-Kroeze, Netherlands tt 2009/10.

6...d6 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.0-0

The previous moves required no comments, and had in fact all been mentioned by Nielsen (2011), who also gave the move that the engines now prefer:

9...h5! The march of the h-pawn is awkward to meet.

10.h3

Or 10.h4 ♘d4 (the manoeuvre 10...♘e5-g4 is also strong) 11.♘ce2 ♗g4 (11...♘xe2+ 12.♕xe2 f5!) 12.f3 ♘xe2+ 13.♕xe2 ♗e6 14.c3 d5 and Black was up for preference in Badmatsyrenov-Zhuk, Ulan Ude 2012.

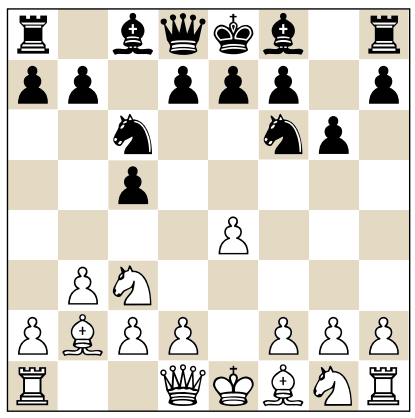
10...h4 11.♘ge2 f5 12.d3 f4! 13.♘d5? 13.f3. **13...f3!** and the Women's World Champion was already winning, Ju Wenjun-Hou Yifan, Beijing (blitz) 2014.

Variation B

4.♘c3 A normal developing move that promises White no opening advantage though.

4...♗g7

The provocative reply (threatening to abuse the situation on the long diagonal by taking on e4), but there is nothing wrong with 4...♘c6:



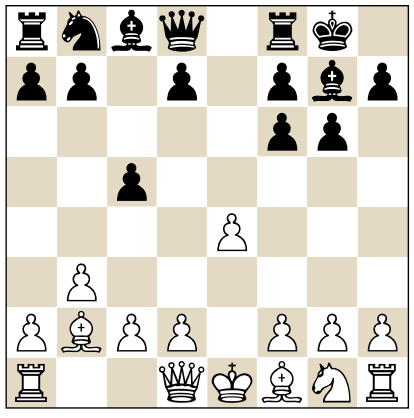
5.♗b5 (5.♘d5 ♗g7 is harmless too) 5...♘d4!? this leads to interesting complications (the alternative is simply 5...♗g7 6.d3 0-0 7.♗xc6 bxc6, Wege-McShane, Kuppenheim (blitz) 2003) 6.e5 ♘h5 7.♘ge2 (7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 is comfortable for Black, but better than the text) 7...♗g7 8.g4. Consistent, but 8...♗xe5! 9.♘xd4 (9.gxh5 ♘xb5, Black better) 9...cxd4 10.gxh5 (10.♕e2 ♕c7 11.♘d5 ♕d6, Black slightly better) 10...dxc3 11.♗xc3 ♕c7 12.♗xe5?! ♕xe5+ was better for Black in the rapid game Morozevich-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2014.

5.e5

White often forces Black's knight to the edge of the board in this system. Strangely enough the knight is almost never in danger there, while pawn e5 often turns out to be a weakness.

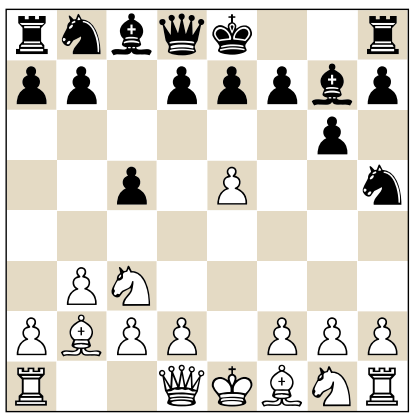
5.♘d5 may look good at first sight, but White's kingside development is so bad (non-existent!) that he can-

not afford to lose time to damage Black's structure: 5...0-0 6.♘xf6+ exf6 (equally good is 6...♗xf6 7.♗xf6 exf6 8.♗c4 f5, when 9.exf5?! d5 10.♗d3 ♕g5! gives Black a dangerous initiative),



and now:
– 7.d3 ♖e8 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.♘f3 f5 10.♗xg7 fxe4! 11.dxe4 ♔xg7 12.0-0 (12.♕d3 d5!, and Black is slightly better) 12...♖xe4 gave White insufficient compensation for the pawn in Kasakewitsch-Gutman, Wiesbaden 1996.
– 7.♗c4 ♖e8 (or 7...f5) 8.♗d5 ♘c6.
– 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.♘e2 ♘e5 9.♗c4 f5 and a draw was agreed in Vives-Castelltort, Catalunya 2013, but Black was already better.

5...♘h5



6.♘f3

White should not be greedy trying to win the edgy knight with 6.♘d5?! d6 7.g4? for Black is clearly better after 7...dxe5 8.♘xe7 (after 8.♗g2 e6 9.♘e3 ♘f4 Black is better, Philippe-Tiemann, Pardubice 2009) 8...♕xe7 9.gxh5 0-0 Zakarian-Mah, England 2014.

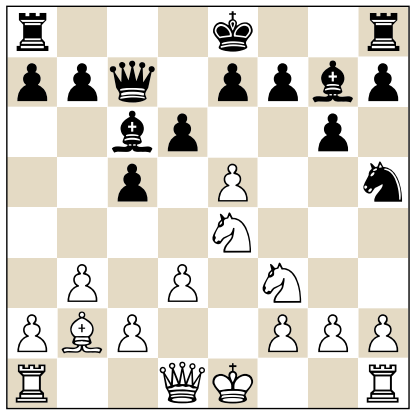
6...♘c6 7.♘e4 d6

Let's follow the example of Ivanchuk. However, Black is also better after 7...b6 8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2 d5!, Khademi-Idani, Rasht 2012.

8.♗b5

The only decent move.

8...♗d7 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.d3 ♕c7!

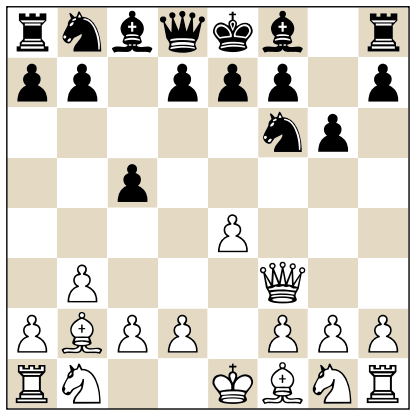


Threatening to take on e5, while planning a neat tactical line after 11.exd6. White's opening strategy is a complete failure for Black is also better after any of the following moves: 10...0-0, 10...♕b8, and 10...♘f4.

11.exd6 ♕a5+! 12.c3 ♗xe4 Or 12...f5 13.♘ed2 exd6, and Black is better. **13.d7+ ♔f8 14.dxe4 ♗xc3+ 15.♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 16.♔f1 ♖d8 17.g3 ♘f6 18.♔g2 ♖xd7 19.♕e2 ♕d3** And Black had consolidated his extra pawn, Vila Gazquez-Ivanchuk, Benidorm 2008.

Variation C

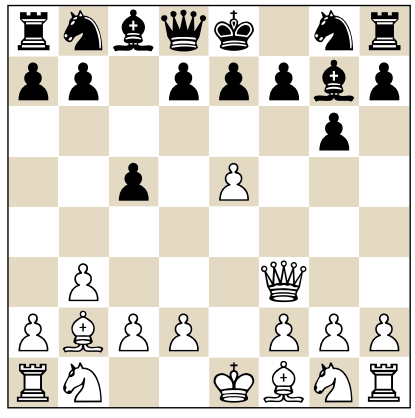
4.♕f3



A creative set-up, although bringing out the queen this early looks suspicious. The idea is that e4-e5 now forces the knight to the edge of the board, but we have already seen in several lines that this hardly constitutes a problem for Black. So, I believe that the queen move falls short.

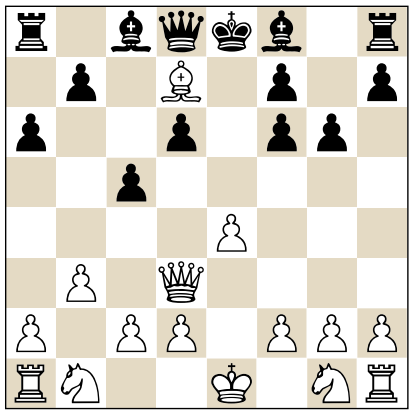
4...♘c6

Navara's choice is our main line, and Black's perfect score is an indication of its strength. Yet, the alternatives are not bad either.
– It looks dangerous to play 4...♗g7 for after 5.e5 the knight must return to its original square: 5...♘g8 (5...♘h5? 6.g4 does win the knight). However, now White, having said A (4.♕f3 and 5.e5), is forced to execute B (6.e6), which is at best double-edged:



6.e6 ♘f6 7.exf7+ ♔xf7 8.g4. Otherwise Black just castles artificially with ...♖f8 and ...♔g8 and has the edge. 8...h6 9.♘c3! is the reason why I would prefer 4...♘c6. Black is probably still fine, but White is having fun too. (9.h4 ♘c6 10.g5 hxg5 11.hxg5 ♖xh1 12.♕xh1 – 12.gxf6? ♗xf6 13.♗xf6 ♖xg1! and wins – 12...♘h5 was Nielsen's analysis in his seminal article in *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian*, his verdict that Black is fine still stands) 9...d5 (9...♘c6 10.0-0-0 ♘d4?! – 10...d5! – 11.♕g3?! – 11.♕g2! – 11...d5 12.h3 a6 13.f4 h5! 14.g5 h4! 15.♕f2 ♘h5 16.♘xd5 ♘g3! was unclear in Shaw-Safarli, Tromsø Olympiad 2014. White will lose the exchange, for which he obtains sufficient compensation though) 10.h3 e6?! 11.0-0-0 ♘c6 12.♖e1 ♘d4 13.♕g2 ♗d7 14.♘f3 ♘xf3 15.♕xf3 ♗c6 16.♗d3 ♕d6 17.h4 and White is definitely better, Short-Jones, Bunratty 2012. The weakness of Black's king is much more important than his pawn centre. Short played an excellent middlegame to obtain a winning position before squandering his edge (draw).

– 4...d6 5.♗b5+ ♘bd7 6.♗xf6 (6.g4 ♗g7 7.g5 ♘h5 8.♗xg7 ♘xg7 9.♘c3 0–0 10.0–0–0 is not better for White, Reprintsev-Negi, St Petersburg 2012) 6...exf6 7.♕d3! a6 8.♗xd7+ leads to an interesting middlegame (a pair of knights versus a pair of bishops!).



Georgian GM Paichadze played this twice with White. No matter how Black takes back on d7, the chances should be about equal. The knights are equal to the bishops here due to Black's inferior structure. There doesn't seem to be much point in playing this as Black when you can also adopt the exciting 4...♘c6.

5.e5 ♘h5 6.♗c4

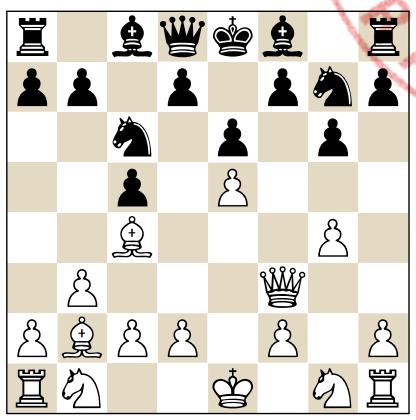
Threatening a type of Scholar's Mate, and more importantly forcing Black to weaken the dark squares with 6...e6. Instead, 6.e6 f6 7.exd7+ ♗xd7 is already somewhat better for Black, and 6.♕e3 b6 (Nielsen) is fine for Black and hasn't been tried in practice.

6...e6 7.g4

White cannot wait with this consistent follow-up. 7.♘e2, Aravindh-Bellahcene, Durban 2014, is no good due to 7...♗g7! when 8.g4? ♘xe5 just wins for Black, and 8.♕e3 d5 9.♗b5 d4 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 11.♕e4 ♕d5 is also terrible.

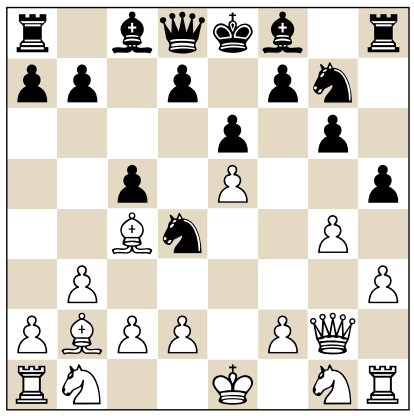
7...♘g7

Superficially, it appears as if White is better. His bishops look good, and what on earth is that fianchettoed knight going to do? In reality Black has a powerful positional threat in the form of ...h5. The idea is that White has overextended his position with 5.e5 and 7.g4 and Black is just itching to creep into the holes that have been created.



8.♕f4?!

– The stem game saw 8.♕g2 (countering a knight fianchetto with a queen fianchetto!) 8...h5! 9.h3 ♘d4 (too dangerous is the greedy 9...♕g5 10.♘f3 ♕f4 11.♘c3 ♘xe5 – 11...hxg4 12.hxg4 ♖xh1+ 13.♕xh1 ♕xg4 14.0-0-0 – 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5+ 13.♔f1, White better; but a decent alternative is the pawn sac 9...♕c7 10.♘f3 b5!? 11.♗xb5 ♗b7 with excellent compensation) and now I will just give some more moves because of their total originality (look at what happens to all four rooks!)



10.♘c3? ♘xc2+ 11.♔d1 ♘xa1 12.♘e4 ♕a5! 13.♗xa1 ♕xa2 14.♗c3 b5?! (14...♖b8–+) 15.♘f6+ ♔d8 16.♕xa8 bxc4 17.♔e2? ♕a6 (17...♔c7!–+) 18.♘f3 cxb3+ 19.d3 ♕b7 20.♕xb7 ♗xb7 21.♘g5 ♗xh1 22.♘xf7+ ♔c8 23.♘xh8 c4! 24.♗b2 hxg4 25.hxg4 a5 and Black's queenside pawns were victorious in Reefat-Neelotpal, New Delhi 2009. Please note that the move order in this game was 4.e5 ♘h5 5.♕f3 ♘c6.

– If chess were checkers then 8.♕f6 would be best. Chess is superior though because we are not forced to take on f6. After 8...h5 9.f3 ♖h7! 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 the queenless middlegame favours Black!

– After the prophylactic (but slow) 8.h3 Black can play conventional chess if he so desires: 8...♗e7 9.♘e2 0-0, and Black is slightly better, or go berserk with 8...♕c7 9.♕f6 b5!? 10.♗xb5 ♘d4 11.♗d3 ♗b7 12.f3 h5. The position is a total mess, but Black is doing fine!

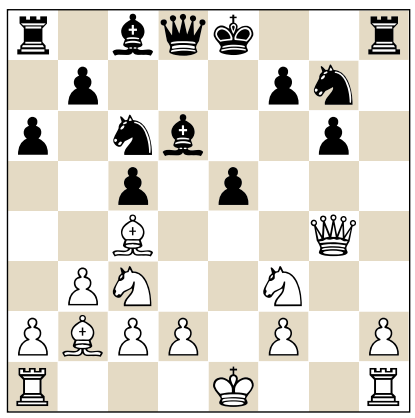
8...h5! Ouch, White is losing control over square f5.

9.♘c3 d5! Developing with tempo.

10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.♕e4 hxg4 12.♕xg4

12.♘b5 0-0 13.♘xd6 ♕xd6 14.0-0-0 ♖b8! is just great for Black too: 15.♕xg4 e5.

12...a6 13.♘f3 e5



Black has a superior pawn structure and great central control, not to mention excellent squares for his minor pieces. The remaining moves were:

14.♕g5 ♗e7 15.♕g1 ♗e6 16.♗xe6 ♘xe6 17.0-0-0 ♘ed4 18.♕g2 ♖h5! 19.a3?! ♕d7 20.♖he1 0-0-0 Black is clearly better.

21.♘a4 ♔b8 22.♘b6 ♕c7 23.♘c4 b5! 24.♘e3 e4 25.♘g1 ♖xh2–+ 26.♕xe4 f5 27.♕d3 ♖xf2 28.♕c3 f4 29.♘g4 ♖g2 Picking up a knight.

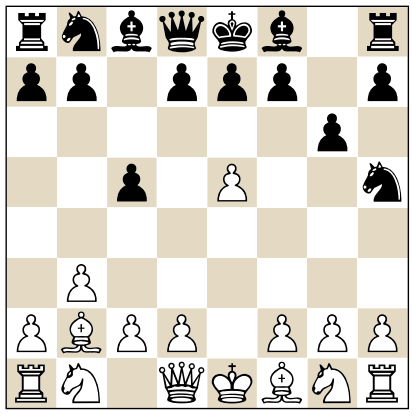
30.♘h6 ♖xg1 0-1, Konopka-Navara, Czech League 2013/14.

Variation D

4.e5 ♘h5!

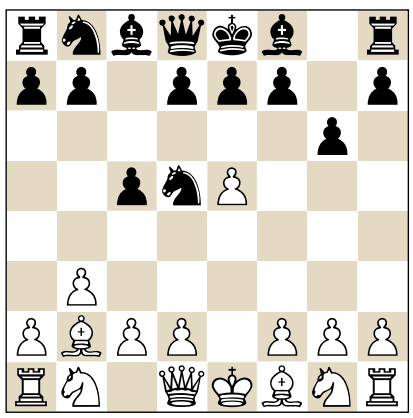
The perfect SOS reply! Loyal readers of this magazine may be reminded of 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘h5, the North Sea Defence, as played by Carlsen

versus Adams at the 2010 Olympiad (New In Chess 2011/1). In the Modern, placing the knight on the edge is debatable, but in our present line we have already seen numerous examples in which Black successfully played his knight to h5.



Still, it was after some deliberation that I opted for the text as our main line. After all, Black has a very decent alternative in 4...♘d5. Note that in practice many of the games featuring that position run via the move order 2...♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♗b2 g6. A sophisticated (or artificial?) argument could be that Black is taking full advantage of the 2...g6 move order by playing the knight to the edge. Certainly, 4...♘h5 gains more points on an SOS scale than 4...♘d5. And because of the overlap with 4.♕f3 there is less to remember. Most importantly though, Black just seems absolutely fine after our little-played text move.

To give you a decent alternative, some pointers after 4...♘d5:



– 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 ♘c7 7.f4 d6 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.0–0 0–0 is a tad better for Black, Conquest-McShane, London 2010/11.

– 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.e6 (6.♗xf7+? ♔xf7 7.e6+ ♔g8 8.♕f3 dxe6! 9.♕c3 ♕d4!, winning, Nielsen (2011)) 6...f6 7.exd7+ (7.♗b5 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.exd7 ♗xd7 10.♗xd7 ♕xd7 was at the very least equal for Black, Short-Nielsen, Internet blitz 2004) 7...♕xd7 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.♘c3 e5 10.♘ge2 0–0 with again comfortable equality, McShane-Mchedlishvili, Warsaw 2013.

– 5.e6 f6 6.exd7+ (6.h4 dxe6 7.h5 ♗g7 8.♘f3 e5 9.♗c4 ♗e6 10.♕e2 ♘c6 favours Black, Safarli-Kurnosov, Plovdiv 2008) 6...♗xd7 7.♗c4 ♗c6 gives Black good central control as always.

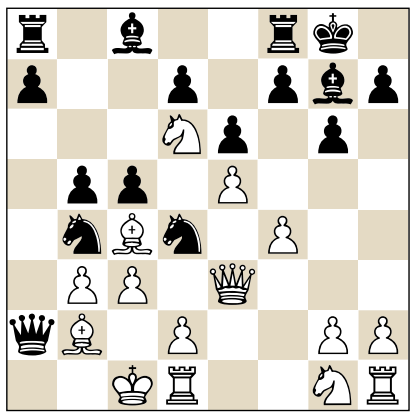
– 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.♗xc3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.♗c4 ♘c6 9.0-0 d5 10.exd6 ♕xd6 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7 12.h3 e5 and White can just about equalize, Fogarasi-Illingworth, Budapest 2014.

– 5.c4 should be met by 5...♘c7.

– 5.h4?! ♗g7 6.♘f3 (6.h5 ♘c6) 6...♘c6 7.♘a3 d6 8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.♗c4 ♗e6 10.♘g5 ♗xe5 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♗xe5 ♘xe5 13.♗b5+ ♘c6 14.h5 ♔d7!, and Black was better, Conquest-Codenotti, Otranto 2011.

– 5.d4?! ♕a5+! 6.c3 (6.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 7.♘xd2 cxd4) 6...cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♘c6 8.♕e4 f5! 9.exf6 ♘xf6 10.♕c2 ♗g7 11.♘f3 d5 12.♘bd2 e5 and Black held the much better chances in Paichadze-Miroshnichenko, Baku 2006.

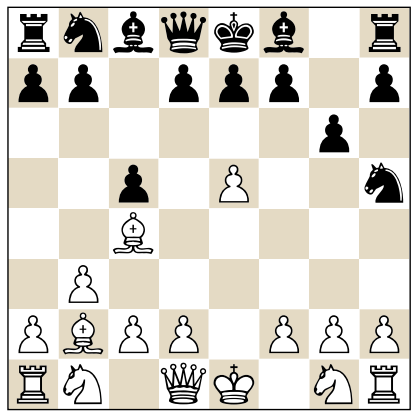
– 5.♕f3!? ♘b4 6.♗c4 (6.♘a3 ♗g7 7.e6 0-0 8.♗xg7 ♔xg7 9.♕c3+ f6 10.♕xc5 ♘8a6 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♕e3 Venkatesh-Akash, Chennai 2012, and now 12...dxe6 slightly favours Black) 6...e6 7.♘a3 ♗g7 8.♘b5 0-0 and with a weak pawn on e5, White was already worse. After 9.0-0-0 ♘xa2+ 10.♔b1 ♘b4 11.♕e3 ♕a5 12.♘d6 ♘8c6 13.f4 ♘d4! 14.c3 ♕a2+ 15.♔c1 b5!



Black had a winning attack in Kabanov-Navara, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

5.♗c4

The thing is that 5.♕f3 is met by 5...♘c6, transposing to 4.♕f3 (Variation C). As we have seen already in similar positions, Black has no need to fear 5.e6 f6 6.exd7+ ♗xd7. Finally 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.d4 0-0 transposes to a position (diagram in the note to 4.♘f3) I mentioned in the introduction.



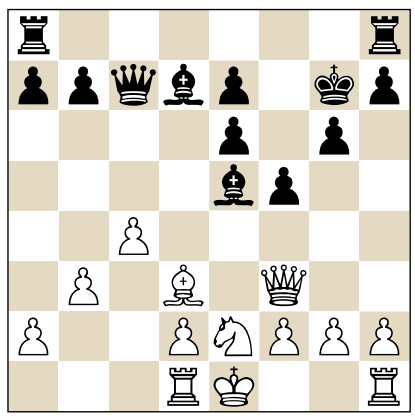
5...♘g7?!

I would prefer 5...♘c6! when 6.♕f3 (6.e6 f6, and 6.♘f3 ♗g7) 6...e6 transposes once again to our main line after 4.♕f3.

6.♘c3 ♘e6

White is slightly better now, which is why Black should just play 5...♘c6!.

7.♘e4?! 7.♘f3. **7...♗g7 8.♕f3?! ♘c6 9.♘xc5 ♘xe5 10.♗xe5** 10.♕g3 ♘f3+ 11.♘xf3 ♗xb2 12.♘xe6 dxe6 13.♖d1 ♗f6 is about even. **10...♗xe5 11.♘xe6 dxe6 12.♖d1 ♕c7 13.♗b5+ ♔f8 14.♗d3 ♔g7 15.♘e2 ♗d7 16.c4 f5**



And Black had an edge in Ramakrishna-Neelotpal, Chennai 2012. ■

ChessBase

NEW!

Mihail Marin: Winning against the King's Indian - With the main line

In the classical system of the King's Indian White develops naturally and refrains from chasing ghosts looking for a refutation of Black's set-up. White instead relies on the fact that natural play should yield him a small but lasting advantage. The main question is whether White can retain the harmony of his pieces in the blocked position of the Mar del Plata attack (7...Nc6 8.d5 Ne7) when both sides attack on opposite wings. The best answer to that question is given by the classical system with 9.Nd2, in which White's knights and bishops cooperate harmoniously. Many great players of the past and the present have used and use this system successfully. Until play becomes very concrete, usually around moves 18-20, positional understanding is far more useful than computer assistance. At first, engines are sceptical about many objectively best white moves, and the author has seen this as a challenge to prove that in certain positions human understanding is still more valuable than the calculating powers of the computer. The videos explaining the Mar del Plata Attack (which form the main part of this DVD) offer strategic guidance and show typical tactical ideas, while presenting a detailed, solid and aggressive repertoire. The less forcing lines (such as 7...Nbd7, 7...Na6, 7...exd4 and 6...Bg4) are covered on a more general level. A new feature that helps the viewer to understand and learn the opening better and faster is the interactive format. Most of the videos alternate general explanations with quizzes giving the viewer a chance to test his knowledge and to increase his skills.

29,90 €

Michal Krasenkow: The Triangle Setup - A complete defense against 1.d4

The Semi-Slav defense (1.d4 d5 followed by ...e7-e6 and ...c7-c6) is one of the most popular opening set-ups for Black. Black can follow two entirely different concepts. One includes an early ...Ng8-f6 and leads to a number of popular and deeply analysed systems: the Meran, the Anti-Meran, the Botvinnik, the Moscow, the Anti- Moscow, the Westphalian, etc. The other, in which Black refrains from ...Ng8-f6 at an early stage, is presented by GM Michal Krasenkow on this DVD. Black keeps a choice between two double-edged interesting systems: the Noteboom variation (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 dxc4) and the Stonewall (... f7-f5) if White plays an early e2-e3. Of course Black's decision to refrain from an early ...Ng8-f6 gives White other options, the most important being the Slav gambit (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e4 etc.). Therefore, Black's set-up may lead to a whole range of different and interesting positions, which help the black player to broaden his strategic and tactical understanding. This makes the Noteboom/Stonewall opening repertoire a particularly good choice for young, aspiring players.

29,90 €

Robert Ris: Tactic Toolbox Meran Variation

The Meran Variation in the Semi-Slav (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5) is a strategically and dynamically complex opening full of tactical possibilities. And this DVD provides you with a comprehensive overview of typical tactical patterns for both sides. Positional concepts are also explained. White often tries to exploit his lead in development by going for a quick assault against the black king, no matter where it resides! Black hopes to survive White's aggression and to counterattack in the centre, and this clash of plans leads to double-edged and tactical positions. In interactive format IM Robert Ris offers you a lot of exercises, including hints and advice that help you to know key tactical patterns of this variation to play it with success. The DVD is a must for those who want to learn more about this opening, and a pleasure for those who enjoy razor sharp battles of the world's greatest players!

29,90 €

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SENIOR MOMENTS

It is a miraculous fact that, once in a while, despite the inept administration with all its wretched habits, FIDE does something praiseworthy. While not as momentous as the banning of smoking, the relatively recent introduction of a 50+ age category was one such benign innovation. For sure, there has been the odd grumble from a few curmudgeonly oldies, who resent the intrusion of these young upstarts and rapscallions onto territory which was hitherto exclusively theirs. Nevertheless, the logic for the new classification is impeccable: how many semi-centenarians are ranked in the top 100? Not many, I can tell you…

Last year I was contacted by Terry Chapman, who welcomed my approaching senescence as an opportunity for recruitment for the 2015 World Senior Team Championship. Terry, who once famously played against Kasparov in a match at the odds of two pawns, previously made a wad in the City with a string of eponymous companies and, although by no means rich beyond avarice, importantly had the wherewithal to sponsor the side. Joining me in the retro line-up were 1980s England stalwarts, Dr. John Nunn, and Jonathan Speelman, plus the reigning European Senior Champion, Keith Arkell: in other words, an olive farmer, an astronomer, a cruciverbalist and a shoe-fetishist – a motley crew, if ever there was one. Terry requested that he become captain and team-manager. As reserve, he also wanted to play a minimum of four games. The consensus was that, as he was funding the whole campaign, he could even give a simul on all boards, if that was his desire.

With the meticulousness of a former Managing Director, Terry had taken an exploratory team to Vilnius in 2014. This was only the second time that the World Senior Team Championship had been held, after the inaugural event, in the Isle of Man, in 2004. Terry reasoned that, with steadily aging populations, the event would only become stronger, and that the best time to win it was now, while the tournament was not firmly established. The modest line-up, which included GM James Plaskett, and the IMs John Cox and Malcolm Pein, did not distinguish itself particularly, but nevertheless finished second, behind the host nation, thanks primarily to a stellar performance from Terry, plus solidity from Keith, on top board. Obviously we were going to do better with a far stronger team in Dresden…

The first problem though was the schedule. For totally misguided reasons the organisers had decreed that all rounds, bar the first, start at 9.30 am. This meant that an essential component of modern chess – preparation – was effectively dispensed with. For this reason, at the captain's meeting, Terry proposed that the team lists be submitted the previous evening. However, someone rightly interjected that it would be unfair to select your team in advance when you could not possibly anticipate if any of your players would be sick in the morning – a salient point, given the age of the participants. Glenn Flear contributed that all these problems would be solved if we started at a normal time, but this eminently sensible suggestion gained no traction whatsoever with the obdurate officials. At this point I threw in my trump card: knowing full-well that Germans have a reverence for the law in diametric opposition to the inhabitants of the country where I reside (Greece), I quoted article 3.2 of the FIDE 'Recommendations for Organization of Top Level Tournaments': 'There must be no main playing session before 13.00 hours, local time.'

As the wording suggests, this quaint document was written before the abolition of adjournments, and is in need of thorough revision. Nevertheless it remains in the FIDE Handbook, which therefore necessitated an explanation why the crystal-clear interdiction should be ignored. After an embarrassed pause, the boss, Dirk Jordan, stood up and answered 'I know'. Was he implying that the World Senior Team Championship (WSTC) was not a 'top-level tournament'? Being in public, this was, of course, quickly denied. Instead he emphasised that this was a newish event in the calendar and that not all details had been set in stone. There would be an opportunity to discuss future events on Saturday – which, of course, was no help whatsoever for the current competition. Suffice it to say, by the weekend, the official position had shifted somewhat. By then it was stressed that the WSTC was not officially designated by FIDE as 'top-level' – which was hardly surprising since the regulations were last amended in 1992, long before the tournament came into existence.

> ‘How many semi-centenarians are ranked in the top 100? Not many, I can tell you…’

There was nothing more to be done. Seeing that there were only a limited number of strong teams, I rested for the first round, ostensibly to recover from my exertions in Ireland (a mammoth simul in Belfast, followed immediately by the boisterous beer-fest of Bunratty), but in reality to meet the looming deadline for my unfinished New In Chess article. We won convincingly, as we did indeed in the next two rounds as well. Alas, calamity struck soon afterward when we faced the tough Slovak team – one of our main rivals. John Nunn had been distinctly unwell the previous day and lacked all vigour against Stohl. I drew uneventfully with Ftacnik, as did Speelman against Gennady Timoschenko. This left only Keith with the white pieces against Peter Petran. Normally this would be a highly advantageous situation, given how superbly Keith has performed in the last year and the fact that he outrated his opponent, who exclusively employed the suspect Leningrad Dutch, by a good 150 points or so. We all have our off-days, but this made an excruciatingly painful spectacle. In the early middlegame, Keith made about half a dozen consecutive moves where, in modern parlance, ‘face-palm’ and ‘WTF’ best conveyed the mental aberrations. The total malfunctioning of thought processes was epitomised by his later comment that he had barely considered his opponent capturing an important central pawn which he had generously left *en prise*. This was a very weird admission in itself and even more so given the fact that the obvious and strong response was practically forced.

With hindsight, this proved to be the key match of the whole event – at least for England 1. When Slovakia subsequently held off the forceful challenge of the powerful Germany 1 team, they were in clear water and could not be stopped. They did not lose a single one of their 36 games and thoroughly deserved their outstanding victory. Unfortunately there was more suffering to come for England when we succumbed to Germany – Keith again being the culprit, this time against Tischbierek; a narrow and somewhat risky repertoire to blame, rather than temporary brain-damage. Nevertheless we finished well enough, with a crushing win over Scotland, to earn the final spot on the podium.

Despite the inexcusable starting-times, the event was generally pretty well organised, and I believe that most people had a pleasant experience. Who could not enjoy the sociable banter, over dinner and a nice glass of wine, about rheumatism, hip-replacements and dodgy prostate glands? At the risk of sounding whingey, however, there were a few other areas where things could be improved:

1. It is patently inadequate, for what is, after all, a World Championship, to broadcast only one solitary match in each section (the over 65s was won convincingly by Russia, incidentally). Electronic boards are costly, but the hosts could hardly plead poverty – particularly when over 400 people were paying for a 10-day hotel-stay. I personally heard literally dozens of complaints from people around the world who were unable to follow the tournament properly. I would hazard a rough guess that the sponsors missed out on a potential audience of, at least, several thousands.

2. The official website was also surprisingly poor.

3. The toilets were too far away – an important point given the fast time control and age of the participants. Perhaps future tournaments should be sponsored by Pampers.

4. The cacophonous music to signify the start of the rounds was both unnecessary and disturbing. If one insists upon an aural assault, try Bach next time. He is German. And good.

Next year’s event will be held at a different venue, close by in Saxony. This is a very reasonable decision given that Germany has by far the best developed senior circuit. I can only foresee such tournaments gaining in popularity and prestige, whilst increasing in competitiveness. It has already expanded dramatically from the first, embryonic edition. For now, there are still major omissions of teams even within Europe, but I would predict that it is only a short matter of time before India, China and others compete for honours. It was wonderful to see Argentina represented this time. I can only ask that the organisers please note that this is first and foremost a chess tournament in which sporting principles are paramount. This includes adequate time for preparation. It must never become a holiday-camp for the elderly, with a bit of chess tagged on as an afterthought. If this distinction is remembered, we will be back, with relish, for another shot in 2016. ■

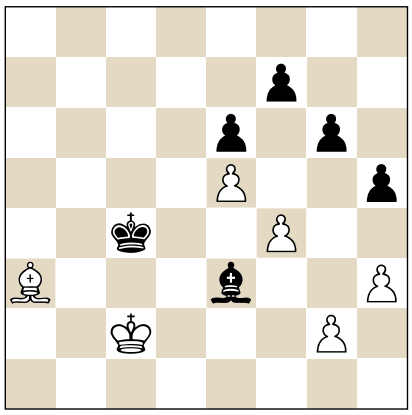
A swindler just doesn't give up

Like so many of us, **Parimarjan Negi** used to think that some players are just lucky. While he would frequently spoil winning positions, nobody ever did that against him. After he learnt to stop blaming his bad luck, he realized that you have to be a swindler.

When you realize that you've ended up in a bad position, it's natural to start thinking about the looming possibility of defeat. You start feeling desperate, and playing the game is no longer much fun. Instead of trying to find every last trick, you think back to every missed chance. Most importantly, you begin to feel like it's out of your hands. Thinking that you can only win if your opponent blunders, you lose interest in trying your best. This is the moment when the swindler inside you should wake up. Because swindlers just don't give up. The key is to forget about whatever happened before – after the game is over, there will be enough time to be mad about your mistakes. While the game lasts, you have to find the joy in every tactical trick you calculate. You have to understand what your opponent is thinking, maintain whatever tension you can. Give your opponent enough chances to go wrong. Never give up, hang in there.

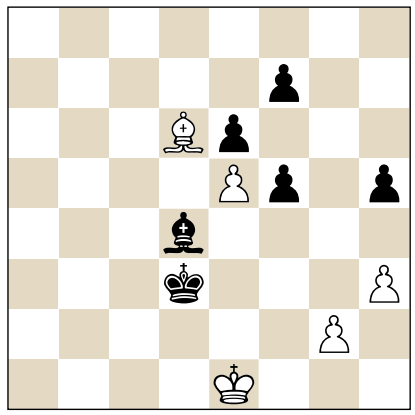
Is it even lost?

In the following game, I have played the last hour or so in a daze, waiting to lose, but despite my horrid position the game has dragged on. Now I will probably lose both central pawns, and the end feels near, but I just continue playing without any real hopes, mostly just unable to believe that I got outplayed by a 2200 player…

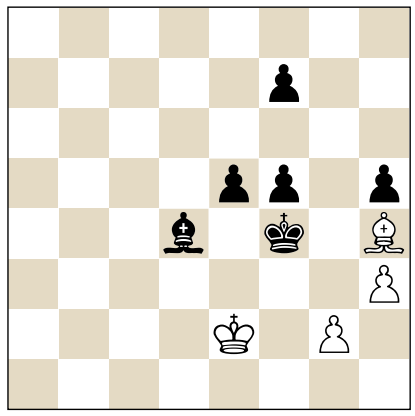


Negi-Liu Guanchu
Beijing 2012

46.f5 gxf5 47.♔d1 ♔d3 48.♔e1 ♗d4 49.♗d6 Black has a lot of ways to win here, but...♔e3, followed by...f4-f3, is probably the simplest. Instead, considering the game over, he just collects the e5-pawn.



49...♔e4 50.♔e2! ♗xe5 51.♗c5 ♗d4 52.♗d6 e5 53.♗e7 ♔f4 54.♗h4!



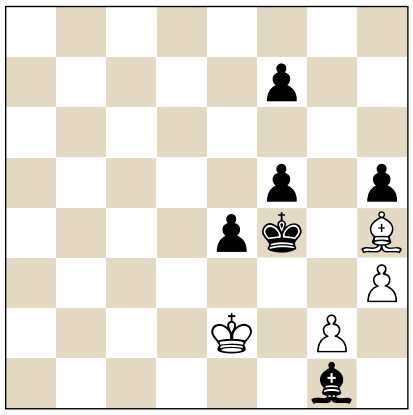
I didn't really have any hopes of defending, but it seems I have come up with a rather tough-to-crack fortress. Still, I felt down and in a bad mood because of my play before, and instead of thinking how to maximize my chances, I just played by hand.

54...♗c5 55.♗e1 ♔e4 56.♗h4 ♔f4 57.♗e1 ♗e7 58.♗f2 ♗b4 59.♗h4 ♗c5 60.♗e1 ♗g1

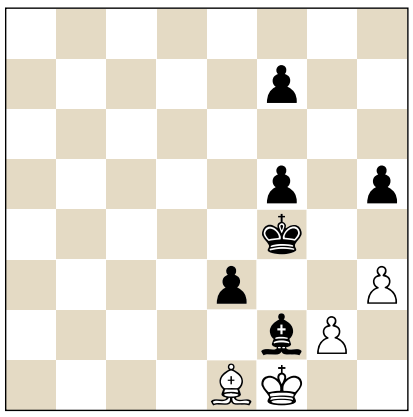
Planning ♗h2-♗g3 ? Well, it's kind of pointless. Even though I felt there were

some drawing chances, I was too upset about my play to really think about it with a clear head, so I just continued.

61.♗h4 e4



62.♗e1? Continuing in my unmotivated state, I fail to see Black's winning idea. Most importantly, I didn't really believe I could hold, so I didn't try to find the best defence. Which was 62.♔f1!, avoiding the...e3-...♗f2 idea: 62...♗c5 (or 62...♗h2 63.♔f2 e3+ 64.♔f1 ♗g3 65.♗e7, and there is still no way to improve) 63.♔e2. I don't know if Black can somehow win this. Quite possibly, he can. But neither I, nor my computer, sees an obvious way to break the fortress... **62...e3! 63.♔f1 ♗f2** And now it's over.



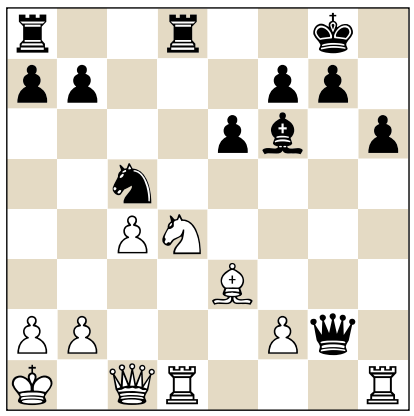
64.♗a5 Or 64.♗xf2 exf2 65.♔xf2 h4 winning. **64...♔g3 65.♗c7+ f4 66.♗d6 h4 67.♗c7 f5 68.♗d6 e2+** And Black won quickly.

As this game shows, once you've accepted defeat psychologically, you might not see an opportunity even if it presents itself. So first of all – it's impossible to not think about losing, but you must not focus on that thought until you resign!

Ghosts in the mind

What is your opponent thinking when he's close to winning? He feels the hard work is already done. He should win – it must be easy, without all those pesky long calculations. He begins to avoid taking any 'risks' – he wants to win safely, without giving you any chances. This makes his calculation less objective – and it's your big opportunity to create threats that don't even exist. Your task is to create such 'ghost' threats. And while avoiding such threats, he might actually fall into one of the devilish traps that you're constantly plotting.

Watch this recent miracle win I got in the US:



Negi-Enkhbat
Burlingame 2015

White's position is bad. Not only am I two pawns down, but it's just hard to keep the centre and queenside together. And the bishop on f6 not only causes major trouble along the diagonal, it also restricts most of my attacking chances. My only chance was to create something along the g-file, but clearly that wasn't going to happen easily. So I started it one move at a time.

26.f3

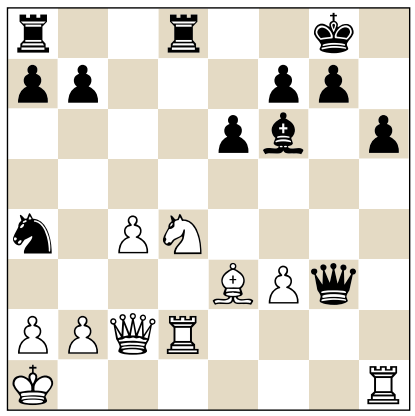
Since no sacrifice was working, this prevents...♕e4 and hopes to create some problems for the queen in the future. After 26.♖xh6, 26...♗xd4! finishes the game immediately.

26...♘a4!

26...♕g3 is the natural move, but here he has to contend with ♖xh6 and ♗f4 besides the ♖g1 moves.

27.♖d2 ♕g3 28.♕c2

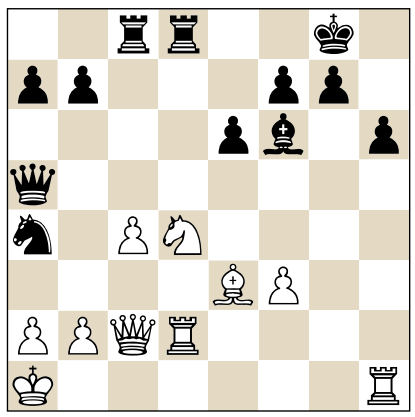
I have avoided the immediate ♕xb2-based ideas. Of course, Black has many ways to win, but I'm keeping my ideas of ♖g2, etc., alive.



28...♕e5 29.♖e2

One of the key psychological factors is not thinking about all the winning options you can see for your opponent – try to imagine the natural moves he can make, and keep the game going with some vague tactical ideas of your own. That's why I did not go for 29.♖e1 – after that ♗xh6 would be almost impossible to get.

29...♕a5 30.♖d2 ♖ac8



Here I was ready to resign. ♗xh6 wasn't working, and there wasn't anything else. Instead, I decided to continue creating any threats that I could think of.

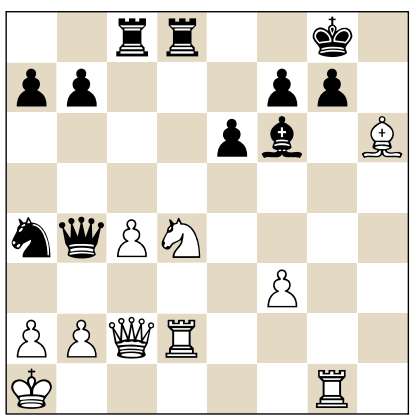
31.♖g1 It was easy to see that ♗xh6 wouldn't work. So this was my only way to create any threats...

31...♕b4 As it turns out, it is the computer's favourite move. It's important to realize that natural king moves like...♔f8 or...♔h8 give me tactical options – if...♔f8, then he has to always contend with ♘xe6 or ♕h7 – a big concession from his side when he imagines he should be simply winning. While after 31...♔h8 any ♗xh6 ♖h2

ideas actually involve serious calculations.

32.♗xh6!

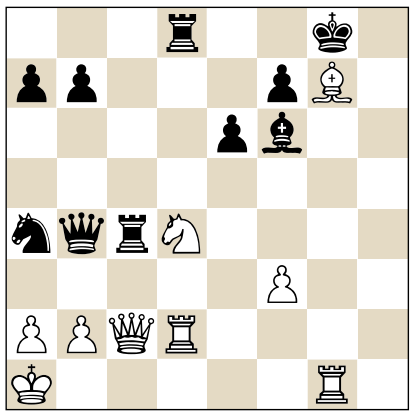
It was obvious I was lost, but there was some slight time-trouble – five to six minutes each – and I decided to go for this, since there was no way I could hold my position together without losing any hopes for counterplay. All I saw was that his most natural reply, 32...♖xc4, allowed some weird tactics.



32...♖xc4??

The most natural way to get a winning advantage was 32...♕xb2+ 33.♕xb2 ♘xb2 34.♗xg7 ♗xg7 35.♖dg2 ♘xc4 36.♖xg7+ ♔f8, but here I was hoping perhaps my activity might offer some miracles.

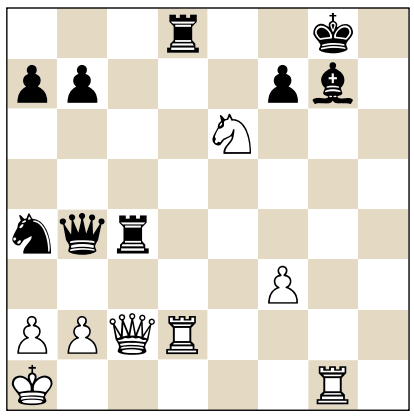
33.♗xg7! Oops. The idea is a little ridiculous and I didn't even realize how strong it was until after I had played it. Black can still escape with ...♗g5!, but if you allow counterplay in a winning position, it's hard to recuperate and think with a clear head.



33...♗xg7

After 33...♖xc2 White plays 34.♗xf6+ ♔f8 35.♖xc2! and 36.♖h2 is a killing threat.

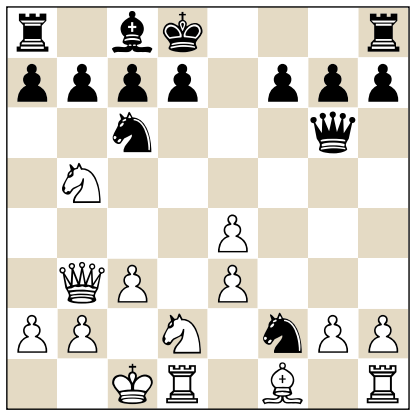
34.♘xe6!



34...fxe6 As it's mate after 34...♖xc2 35.♖xd8+ ♔h7 36.♖xg7+ ♔h6 37.♖h8. **35.♖xd8+ ♔f7 36.♕g6+** And I won quickly.

White seems ridiculously lucky in this game, but even though I realized how bad my position was, I never tried to think about how close I was to losing – and that allowed me to continue to calculate and grasp any remaining tricks.

Here is an example with me seeing ghosts, against India's best swindler. Rathnakaran is known to get really bad positions in the openings, but that never makes playing against him easy.

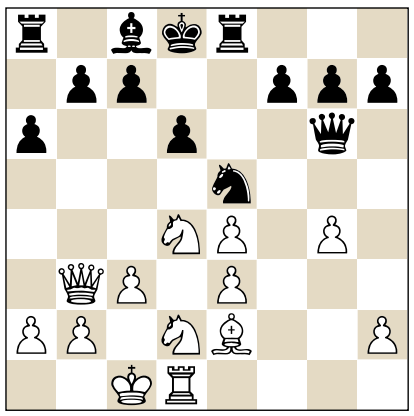


Rathnakaran-Negi
Mangalore 2008

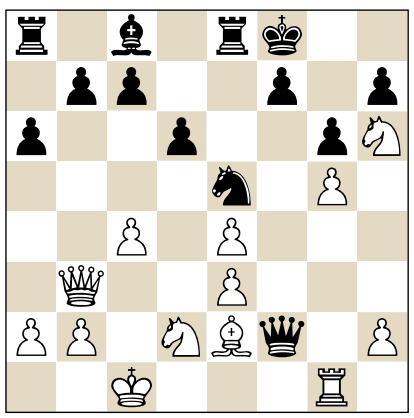
In 11 moves White has managed to get a completely lost position. But he continues as if nothing's the matter, playing natural moves as if the position was equal.

12.♗e2 ♘xh1 13.♖xh1 d6 14.♘d4 ♘e5 15.g3 ♖e8 16.♖d1 a6 17.g4

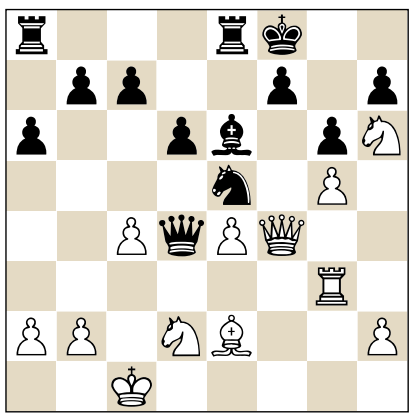
Even wasting time with g3-g4. It doesn't matter too much – Black is still winning, but with so many pieces it's never just simple.



17...♔e7 18.♘f5+ ♔f8 19.♖g1 ♕e6 20.c4 g6 21.♘h6 ♕f6 22.g5 ♕f2 I am starting to get impatient, and trying to finish off quickly.

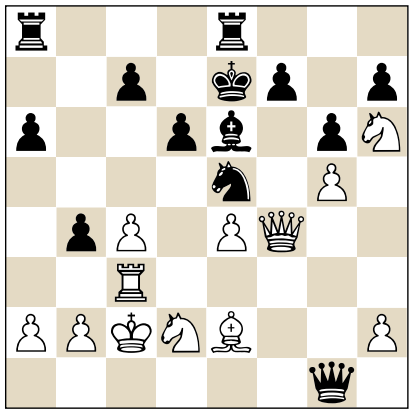


23.♕d1 ♕xe3 24.♕f1! Suddenly ♕f6 involves some threats, although White remains lost. **24...♗e6 25.♖g3 ♕d4 26.♕f4** White is not in a hurry. I'm not sure why, but I started seeing strange ghosts here...
So I tried to bring the king to safety:

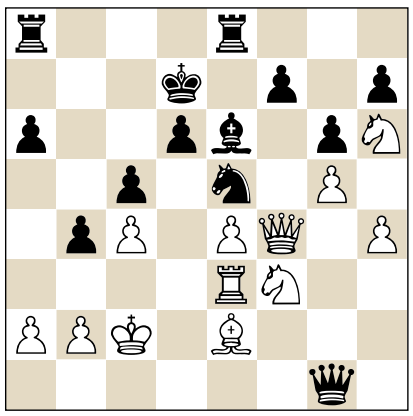


26...♔e7? 27.♘b3! No good squares. **27...♕a7 28.♘d2** But White has nothing to do, so he just keeps the position. **28...b5 29.♖c3** Strangely passive play for such a lost position, but the key is not to lose instantly. And I see even stranger things...

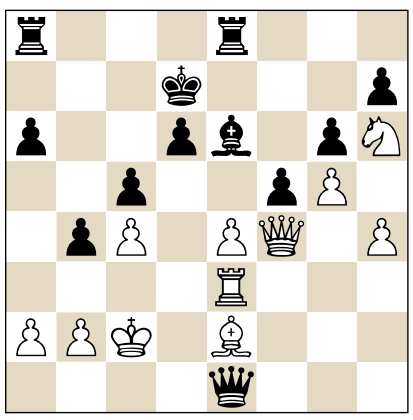
29...♕g1+ 30.♔c2 b4 The computer doesn't notice anything wrong, but:



31.♖e3! Shuts my queen out.
31...c5?! 32.h4 ♔d7? 33.♘f3!
Suddenly it's complicated.



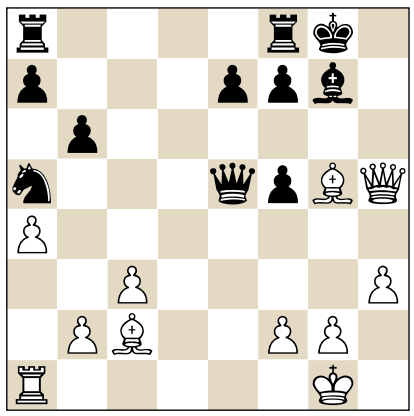
33...♘xf3 34.♖xf3 Threatening ♖d3... **34...♕e1 35.♖e3! f5?** Panic.



36.gxf6? 36.♗f1 ♕a1 37.♖d3, and Black can resign. **36...♔c7!** With an insanely complicated position that I somehow won in a time-scramble.

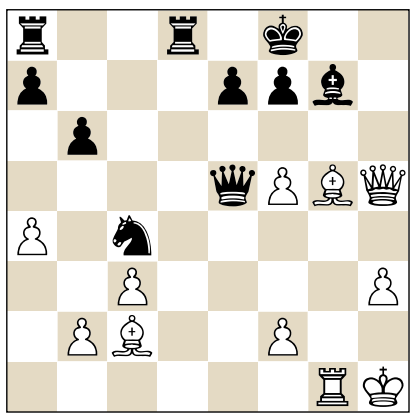
Why wouldn't you just resign?

Sometimes you're so obviously lost, you might want to resign just to save the embarrassment. But even then miracles can happen. Here we come back to another Rathnakaran game to see a ridiculous turnaround in a high-tension qualification match. The position is very, very lost, but note how he manages to keep some vague tactical options in the air. Most importantly – he makes sure he doesn't lose by force.

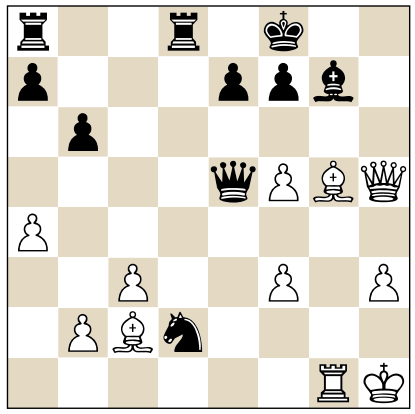


Rathnakaran-Sethuraman
Bhopal 2013

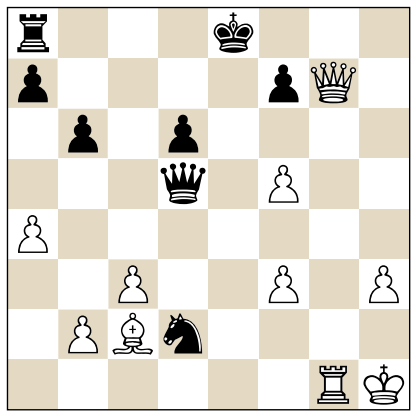
23.g4 Black has many ways to win, but he played precisely enough:
23...♖fd8 24.gxf5 ♔f8 25.♔h1 ♘c4 26.♖g1



26...♘d2
Planning ...♕d5+. 26...♕d5+ 27.f3 is actually surprisingly complicated.
27.f3!
Do not lose hard. Sometimes, they'll go wrong...



27...♖d6?
Black had many winning lines, e.g. 27...f6 or 27...e6.
Trying to be too careful, he makes an almost imperceptible error!
28.♕g4! ♔e8 29.♗f4 ♕d5 30.♗xd6 exd6 31.♕xg7



Whoa, a complete turnaround, which White converted.

Conclusion

Play your opponent, and not the position. Do not think about all the ways that you can lose. Instead, keep enough options on the board so your opponent has a chance to see ghosts and lose his bearings. The closer he gets to winning, the less he wants to work – exploit that state of mind!

Even though the swindler is the hero in this article, you can also pick up some useful strategies about not getting swindled. If you find yourself in a winning position, stop thinking that you're winning and continue to calculate objectively. Do *not* see ghosts – if there's some obscure threat, calculate it. Sure, you can avoid certain risks if you want – but not because you're too lazy to calculate. ■

'Keep enough options on the board so your opponent has a chance to see ghosts and lose his bearings.'

So, how do you resign?

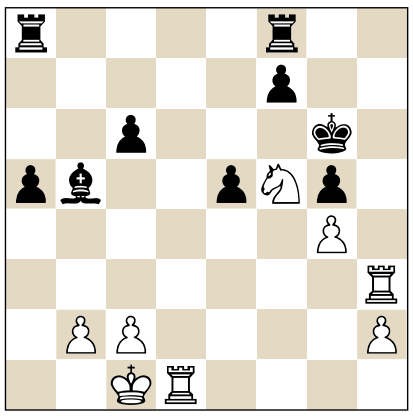
Everyone who plays chess loses sometimes. Back in your childhood you would be checkmated, but if you still play today, you're familiar with the procedure of resigning a game. How do you do this? Do you knock your king over? Slam the board over your opponent's head? Silently stop the clock? Or just offer your hand, saying 'I resign'? **Genna Sosonko** looks at the options.

In the dawn of the game everyone fought for mate. After all, if the goal of chess is mate it makes sense to play on till one of the kings is captured. Ending the battle voluntarily, without waiting for mate to be delivered, was a considerable development in understanding. Players realized that it's stupid to resist when you're facing an enormous, superior army on your opponent's side. This, of course, is purely humane. Animals don't resign under any circumstances. They bite, fight and resist to the last.

'Not a single game has yet been saved by resigning', Savielly Tartakower famously pronounced, and proved this in action, often continuing the battle when at the grandmaster level it could have been halted much sooner. In modern chess there are both followers and opponents of the witty grandmaster.

Among the latter there's Peter Svidler, who often stops the clock to resign in positions that perhaps are losing, but sometimes just 'insufficiently fruitful' (from an amateur point of view). For the St. Petersburg grandmaster it's so unpleasant to look at his own position that he prefers to put an end to it and avoid tormenting agony. A quick seppuku is more appealing than a slow exit in a hospital bed.

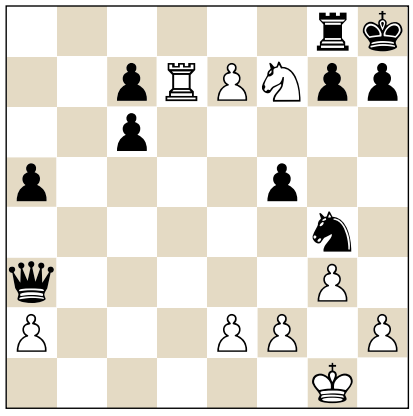
Nigel Short adheres to the opposite point of view. The English grandmaster sometimes offers his opponents the opportunity to present him with a pure mate.



Kristiansen-Short
Copenhagen 2006
position after 33.g4

33...♖h8 34.♖d6+ f6 35.♖d7 ♖xh3 36.♖g7 Mate.

Or another example:



Timman-Short
Tilburg 1990
position after 30.♘f7 mate

We shouldn't think that Nigel was in time-trouble or that he wasn't familiar with the combination that led to smothered mate (which preceded the position in the diagram). It's just that Short, as he himself asserts, wants to make what's happening on the board accessible to everyone, even beginners.

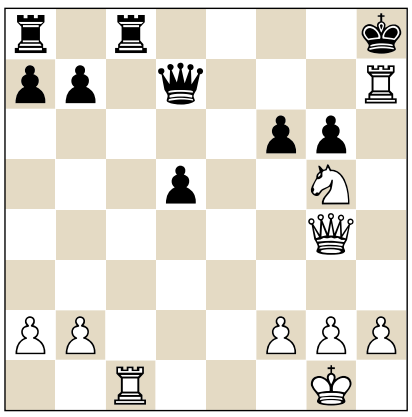
The English grandmaster does this absolutely deliberately. Whereas at the 1968 Olympiad in Lugano Boris Spassky mated a representative of Andorra and, without saying anything, pressed the clock. The other, after thinking for a short time, calmly made a move in response, and a colleague from his team started laughing: 'Ha... ha... He's been mated, and he's moving...'

'Under the table without anyone noticing Lajos would start drying his sweaty hands, preparing to accept a capitulation.'

Walter Browne, having already secured himself first place at Wijk aan Zee in 1974, resigned his last-round game against Andras Adorjan with the words 'Okay, it's yours...' I liked the phrase, so I took it into my armoury and also said 'Okay, it's yours' for a while when I offered my hand to an opponent after a defeat.

There are players on whose faces everything is written. Others are like the sphinx: you don't know what they're thinking about their own position – was their last move a crude blunder, or do they think they've achieved a decisive advantage? I played Lajos Portisch many times. Sometimes I won, more often I lost, but it was impossible to read anything on the face of the Hungarian grandmaster. Only one gesture let me know that Portisch evaluated his own position as completely winning: under the table without anyone noticing Lajos would start drying his sweaty hands, preparing to accept a capitulation.

From the chess legacy of Wilhelm Steinitz the game that enjoys the most fame is the one the first World Champion played against Curt von Bardeleben at Hastings in 1895.



Steinitz-Von Bardeleben
Hastings 1895
position after 25.♖xh7+

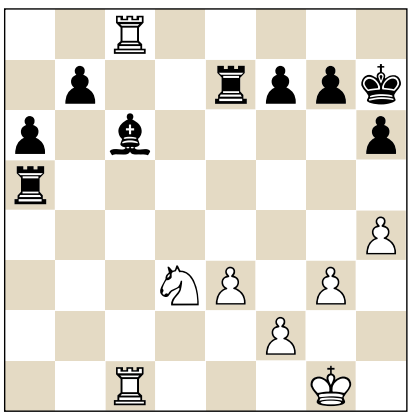
Black will be mated by force. The variations are very beautiful, and doubtlessly you're familiar with them (or you'll find them if you look at the diagram). In all likelihood Steinitz's opponent had also seen them when he left the tournament hall and didn't appear there again that day. This method of resigning a game isn't an example for imitation, of course, although Bardeleben did resort to it more than once in that Hastings tour-

BEREND VONK

nament, which was considered the strongest event of the 19th century.

But Alexander Alekhine, when he lost in Vienna (1922) to Grünfeld in the defence that bears the name of the Austrian maestro, instead of resigning politely, threw his king across the tournament hall. Viktor Kortchnoi did roughly the same thing at the recent World Senior Championship after he came under an unstoppable attack by Evgeny Vasiukov.

Ten games were supposed to be played in the Candidates' match between Tigran Petrosian and Kortchnoi in Moscow in 1971. The first eight ended in draws, and Petrosian won the ninth. In the last game, striving for victory no matter what, Kortchnoi overstepped the mark, and at the moment of adjournment his position was ripe for resignation.

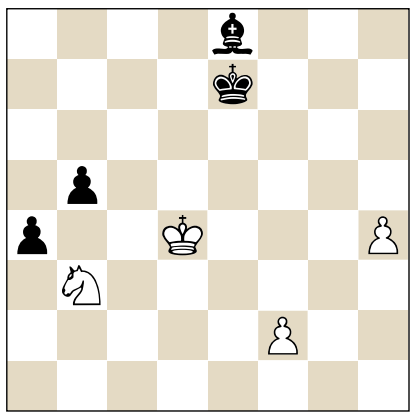


Kortchnoi-Petrosian
Moscow 1971 (10th game)
final position, after 40...♖e7

'If you like I'll resign, or we can have a draw', Kortchnoi said to his opponent, with whom he was still on good terms at the time. 'A draw, of course, it's a draw...' Petrosian replied quickly, stopping the clock. Today, when there's a battle for every rating point, it would never occur to anyone to make such an offer, let alone agree to it.

Kortchnoi has reacted very badly to defeats in recent years. Angrily, he puts his signature on the score sheet (if he puts it there at all), and sometimes, without shaking hands, he starts panning his opponent. Those who win against Kortchnoi will be informed what the celebrated grandmaster thinks about the strength of their moves in the game that just ended, and about the level of their play in general.

Kortchnoi had bursts of tantrums previously too. At the SWIFT tournament in Brussels in 1987 Kortchnoi's game against Karpov took on a clearly drawish character. The queens were exchanged, the rooks, and then the remaining pieces disappeared from the board one after another. There was hardly any wood left, and Kortchnoi offered his opponent a draw. Karpov refused and played on. It was clear that Kortchnoi was starting to simmer, his face distorted into a grimace and...



Kortchnoi-Karpov
Brussels 1987
position after 47...a4, 0-1

... ignoring Black's last move, he touched his king. After looking at the board and realizing that his knight was under attack, Kortchnoi shouted: 'You have no right to play on such positions against me!', after which he knocked the pieces off the board and left the tournament hall. Anatoly Yevgenievich calmly listened to the tirade, put the result **0-1** on the score sheet and signed it.

The most recent case was fairly mild. On March 31, 2014 Kortchnoi was giving a simul in Leipzig on 10 boards. As he signed the score sheet of a winner, nine-year-old Axel Nguyen, the maestro didn't miss the chance to point out to the kid: 'Your position was completely losing, and in general you play very weakly.'

In bygone days, when games were still adjourned, jokers could be found who avoided the procedure of resigning in an absolutely lost position. When the time for adjournment came, instead of the secret move, they wrote the word 'I resign' on the score sheet, signed it, put the score sheet in the envelope and simply didn't appear for the resumption.

■ ■ ■

And how did World Champions resign? In decisive games, when the title was at stake? After resigning the last game of their match, Wilhelm Steinitz got up and shouted 'hurrah' three times for the new World Champion Emanuel Lasker.

Alekhine didn't forget the old traditions, and right after the clock was stopped in his last game against Max Euwe in 1935 he exclaimed: 'Long live World Champion Euwe.' Euwe did the same thing two years later when he lost the return match.

José Raul Capablanca had periods when he didn't lose a game for years. In those rare cases when the Cuban had to resign, he held out his hand in such a way that it gave the impression that this was a king showing mercy to a pauper.

After losing his match against Alekhine, in Buenos Aires in 1927, Capablanca didn't come to the resumption, but sent his opponent a note saying he had resigned the game. True, he appeared at the closing ceremony and congratulated the new World Champion, and the opponents even embraced. Alas, subsequently, relations between these greats deteriorated: they not only cut off all contact, but even became sworn enemies.

In the post-war era only Soviet grandmasters fought for the title of World Champion, and there was no longer any room for such tea ceremonies.

Even more businesslike, so as not

to say harsh, was the procedure of resigning the last game of the match between Boris Spassky and Robert Fischer, the Match of the Century in Reykjavik in 1972. The 21st game was adjourned with a score of 11½-8½ in favour of the American. He had an advantage in the ending, but was it enough for victory? It didn't matter, as Boris Spassky had no wish to resume the game and informed the arbiter that he resigned the game and thus the match.

Bill Lombardy, Fischer's second, tells the story: 'I raced to Cramer's room where we called Lothar Schmid, who at first was unwilling to admit anything. He was afraid that if the news broke Bobby would not show at the hall. Schmid finally told us, "Bobby wins, but it is not official until he signs the score sheet." Paul Marshall, Cramer and I marched to Bobby's third-floor suite. I knocked on the door. "Who is it?" came the voice. "Bill." The door opened a crack. "What do you want? I'm busy analysing the position." "Congratulations! You're world champion!" I exclaimed. "Yeah. I heard some rumour on the radio. Is it true? Is it official?" "It's official", we said. "We spoke to Schmid." "But that's not official", Bobby said disbelievingly. "You better go," he continued, "I've got work to do."

'Marshall and Cramer left while I stayed to take a last glance at the adjourned position. It was already 2 p.m., half an hour before game time. Bobby simultaneously ate, dressed and continued to study the position. Somehow he understood the game was really over. But he wasn't ready to admit this to anyone, even himself. "Why should Spassky resign this position?" he said. "There's a lot of play." I remember when Bobby was 11 or so how he misspelled the word "resign" on score sheets. It was as if he never wanted to use the word. On the way to the hall Bobby sat analysing in the front seat.(…) The car slowly edged through the crowds surrounding the hall and arrived at the players' entrance. Bobby bounced out of the car, pierced the crowds and disappeared.

'In those rare cases when the Cuban had to resign, he held out his hand in such a way that it gave the impression that this was a king showing mercy to a pauper.'

'Spassky did not show. Perhaps, understandably enough, he did not want to suffer the final humiliation of resigning before such a tremendous audience. He had telephoned his resignation, which was permissible under the rules, to Schmid at 12.50 p.m.

'Schmid moved to the front of the Laugardalsholl stage. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Spassky has resigned. This is a traditional and legal way of resignation. Mr. Fischer has won this game, number 21, and he is the winner of the match."'

■ ■ ■

And what do you say when you resign? Probably something like – if I hadn't played ♘b3, I would have been better. Or – I looked at this variation two years ago, and now I've simply forgotten my analysis...

'Yes, it's worse,' grandmaster Liberzon admitted, resigning to me in a game we played at a tournament in Geneva in 1977, while master Katkov, offering his hand to Boris Gulko, said: 'An extremely undeserved defeat!'

I had a special relationship with Vasily Vasilievich Smyslov, and most of our games ended in draws, some without any play at all. At the Tilburg tournament in 1982, I was in a fighting mood, Smyslov played the opening passively, and with each move my advantage increased. When his position became completely lost, he sat up

in his chair, stretched out his hand and solemnly pronounced: 'Be happy, Genna, but don't be proud. I cannot play against my friends!'

Judit Polgar once remarked that she'd never actually beaten a healthy man. Do you also complain of a minor ailment after the game? Or do you engage in self-flagellation, as Ljubomir Ljubojevic was unrivalled at doing? 'I'm an idiot! A complete, utter, miserable idiot!' Ljuba exclaimed after a defeat. 'No, did you see what I did? Unbelievable!! Unbelievable!!.....' Instead of the dots you can insert the relevant expressions: Ljubojevic is a polyglot and pronounced them in all the languages he knew.

'I'm an idiot! A complete, utter, miserable idiot!' Ljuba exclaimed after a defeat. 'No, did you see what I did? Unbelievable!!'

After Edward Lasker won a game against Thomas that was published in all the magazines in the world, the English master, resigning, said with admiration, 'That was brilliant! I defer to you in the highest degree!' Could anyone say something like that today?

Edward Lasker
George Alan Thomas
London 1912

1. d4 e6 2. ♘f3 f5 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. ♗g5 ♗e7 5. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 6. e4 fxe4 7. ♘xe4 b6 8. ♘e5 0-0 9. ♗d3 ♗b7 10. ♕h5 ♕e7 11. ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 12. ♘xf6+ ♔h6 13. ♘eg4+ ♔g5 14. h4+ ♔f4 15. g3+ ♔f3 16. ♗e2+ ♔g2 17. ♖h2+ ♔g1 18. ♔d2 Mate.

■ ■ ■

The procedure of the handshake between opponents in football appeared relatively recently. This ritual has a significantly longer history in chess. By tradition chess players exchange handshakes before and after the game. There were probably some cases earlier too, but at the highest level it was Capablanca and Alekhine who stopped doing this. The champions conducted all their negotiations via an arbiter, and there were times when they even played on different tables.

I won't go into the twists and turns of the conflict in the World Championship match between Topalov and Kramnik in Elista in 2006, but, unfortunately, relations between the two top players soured to such a degree that even today, almost 10 years later, they don't say hello to each other, they don't shake hands with each other either before or after the game, and they even go to press conferences separately.

No one likes resigning, whether they be old or young. The Under-8 Junior World Champion, Ilya Makoveyev from Russia, says: 'Although the opponent I got in the 10th round wasn't weak, he didn't understand the opening and could have resigned after the 13th move. But he carried on tormenting me, himself and the game, he sat and thought, and thought... He sat there the whole time until his flag fell.' In justification of the child we can say that adults also resort to this method of resigning a game.

Ilya, who won all his 11 games in that championship, was probably right, but is it that easy to resign, especially for a child? David Bronstein once said that with children you don't have to take the game to a result: 'Let the kids make 12 or 13 moves and then run off to play football. It isn't good if a child comes home with a zero. It's harsh, it's inhumane.'

I remember how in my own childhood I resorted to the saving formula 'adjourned', replying to my mother's question, 'How did you do?' – but from my downcast appearance she probably guessed the bitter truth.

Today I think that even very little ones should play to the end, no matter how upsetting a defeat is for a child. It's not even about the fact that we live in a society that is completely based on success, however that concept is understood. Life, life itself doesn't only consist of roses, trophies and rounds of applause. In any life sadness and disappointment is inevitable, and perhaps it's best to be prepared for that from a young age.

Competitive chess is a tough business. If in other sports you can win back a lost ball, game or set, and restore equality, and later even win, in chess a mistake is very often impossible to correct. A building constructed for hours, and if you count the time spent on preparation and training, even more – due to one lapse, a loss of concentration, an impulsive move, collapses to its foundations. In the game that's being played it's already too late to fix anything, and only you are to blame for that, you yourself. And no matter how painful it is to acknowledge the injustice of the defeat, try not to lose your temper, and when you resign, don't show what's going on inside you. And especially not when your opponent's victory was achieved completely deservedly.

In 1890 in Utrecht, Holland, the book *The Theory and Practice of the Chess Game* was published. Among other things you can read advice in it about a chess player's behaviour at the board. Paragraphs 2 and 4 haven't lost their relevance even today. 'On defeat show no signs of anger, or on victory – triumph.' And 'In the case of defeat do not berate yourself, but in a gentlemanly manner acknowledge your opponent's better play. Do not take deserved laurels away from the victor.' ■

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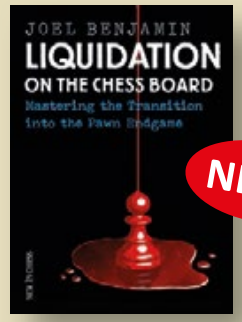

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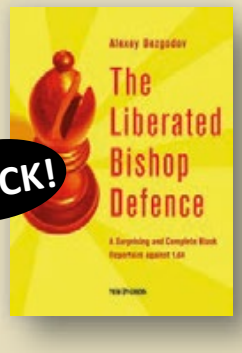

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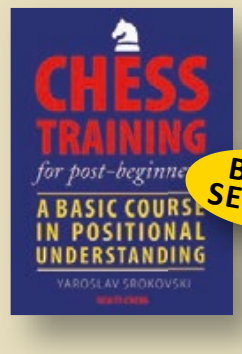

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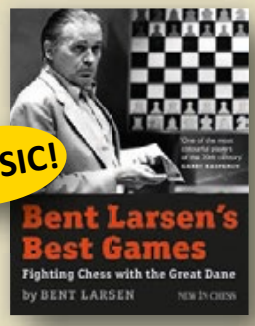

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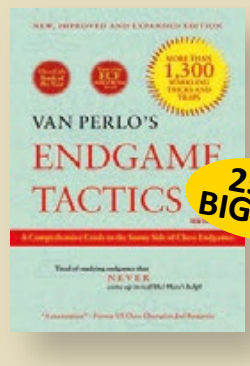

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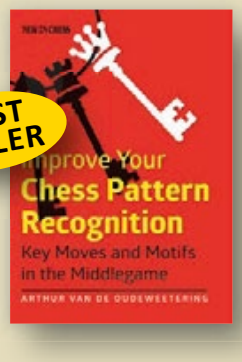

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Hyderabad

It's often said that we have reached a new era in chess, with the long Soviet/Russian hegemony diminishing and the pendulum beginning to swing towards Asia. The 'Summit Match' in Hyderabad between India and China was given added spice by recent comments made by World Champion Magnus Carlsen. **Adhiban Baskaran**, former World U16 champion and one of India's rising stars, reports.

China defeats India 18-14

Reaching the

It was January, the beginning of a new year. And the tournament that invariably tops that same year, each and every year, is the Tata Steel Chess Tournament in Wijk aan Zee. But nowadays, in the new digital media-age, it isn't just the games that entertain us, it's also the online live post-game interviews with the players. One interview that generated a particular amount of interest from all quarters – players, journalists and fans alike – was that with World Champion Magnus Carlsen. One of the questions he was asked by New In Chess editor Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, was about the huge impact the Chinese were making on the international circuit, and whether they will continue to rule the chess world? What surprised me (and many others beside) was Magnus's direct answer: 'Yes, I agree there are a lot of good Chinese players but personally I think India is the country which is going to rule the chess world!'

We all know that Europe has dominated chess for centuries. But over the past 25 years or so, the power has started to slowly shift ever more eastward to Asia. For the moment Europe remains the centre of elite chess with its recent history, super-tournament traditions and professional leagues. However, the 'Asian Threat' is beginning to take the chess world by storm – a storm that started with Indian ace Viswanathan Anand capturing the World Championship title, followed by a large swath of young talents, notably from China and India, emerging to dominate the World Youth Championships. Recently the biggest breakthrough of all came during last year's Tromsø Olympiad, where China won gold and India bronze.

China and India are indeed the new chess superpowers, the forces for the future. Methods differ, though, on how to reach the chess summit. China identifies talents early and provides intensive training, as outlined by national coach Liu Wenzhe in his book *Chinese School of Chess*. In India chess is not far behind cricket as a national sport – with Anand hailed as a hero, and many Indian grandmasters having personal sponsors. Like China, we also have an abundance of good chess coaches with innovative training methods, combined, though, with a wealth of international events held on our own soil to help develop and test the mettle of young players.

But little did I know that very soon I was going to be personally involved in potentially answering the question posed to Magnus of just who between China and India would emerge as the dominant powerhouse for the future – and all thanks indirectly to the World Champion's homeland!

I got a pleasant surprise when I learnt about a 'Summit Match' between India and China to be held at the Marriott Hotel in the city of Hyderabad, in the newly-formed state of Telangana. The match was organized in honour of the Indian team's historic podium-finish at last year's Tromsø Olympiad, after we sensationally snatched bronze ahead of Russia, despite the absence of several

Ding Liren receives a mark on his forehead during the traditional Indian welcome of the Chinese team at the airport. It is supposed to be a divine blessing and the Chinese team couldn't say it didn't work!

Summit

top players and our team being seeded only 19th.

It was therefore also quite easy to choose who the opposition would be: what other team would be better equipped for such a summit showdown than the reigning Olympiad champions, China – the first Asian country to take the open/men's title – themselves?

Soon afterwards, we also discovered that their line-up would be Ding Liren, Wei Yi, Zhou Jianchao and Wang Chen. And our line-up was Krishnan Sasikiran, S.P. Sethuraman, M.R. Lalith Babu and yours truly.

That's the line-ups, so now let's highlight some of the personalities involved, along with some of the best game moments from the match.

Ding Liren

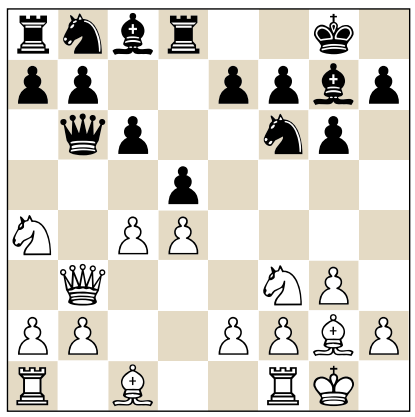
Ding Liren, I have dubbed 'The Great Wall of China'. He's also been described as 'the strongest Chinese player' by Magnus Carlsen himself, and Ding is confidently meeting the requirements of his reputation. Strong opening preparation with new ideas everywhere, and an interesting mix of tactical and strategic play combined with a formidably fantastic fighting spirit.

> 'Like China, we also have an abundance of good chess coaches with innovative training methods.'

After analysing his games many times I realised that the engine just didn't understand his play ☺(which is kind of cool!).

GI 2.3 – D78
Ding Liren
Adhiban Baskaran
Hyderabad 2015 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 d5 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.♕b3 0-0 7.0-0 ♕b6 8.♘c3 ♖d8 9.♘a4

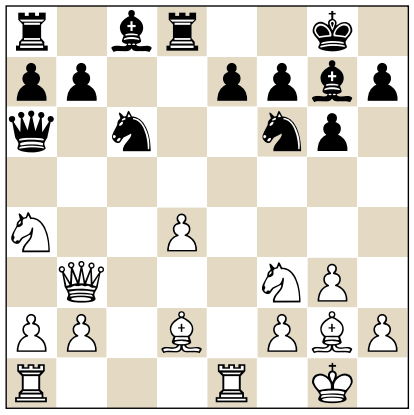


9...♕a6!?

I was hoping to change the pawn structure in my favour.

9...♕xb3 10.axb3 ♘a6 was perfectly possible, leading to a more or less equal endgame.

10.cxd5 ♕xe2 11.dxc6 ♘xc6 12.♖e1 ♕a6 13.♗d2!



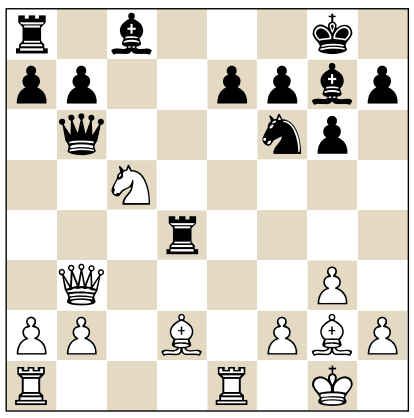
Suddenly the queen is in trouble ☺.

13...♘xd4?

I thought this was very safe, but I had missed White's strong rejoinder on the 16th move. 13...♘d5 was Ding's suggestion: 14.♗f1 ♘a5 15.♕d1 (15.♕a3 ♘c4) 15...b5 16.♘c5, and White has a slight advantage due to his more active pieces.

13...♘g4!? was the ingenious comp solution! But after 14.♗c3!? ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♖xd4 17.♖xe7 ♕f6! 18.♖e8+ ♔g7 19.f3 ♖xa4 Black is barely surviving.

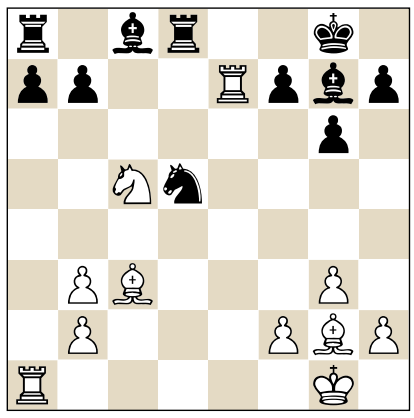
14.♘xd4 ♖xd4 15.♘c5 ♕b6



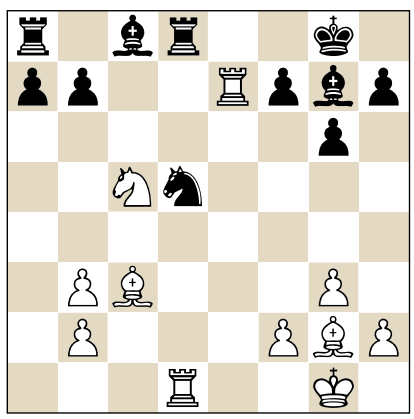
16.♗c3! After 16.♖xe7 ♗e6 17.♘xe6 ♖xd2 18.♕xb6 axb6 I felt Black has reasonable saving chances.

16...♖d8 In case of 16...♕xc5 17.♗xd4 ♕xd4 18.♖ad1 ♕c5 19.♖d8+ ♗f8 there is 20.♕e3!, and White will eventually win the c8-bishop.

17.♖xe7 ♕xb3 18.axb3 ♘d5!?

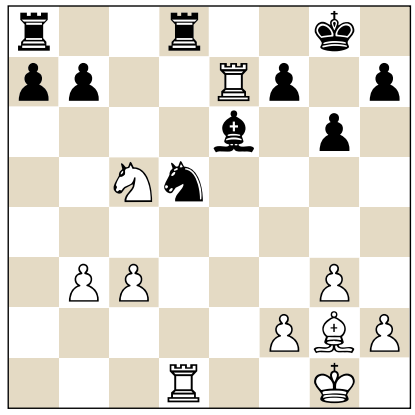


19.♖d1! Stronger than 19.♗xd5, when 19...♗xc3 gives Black decent saving chances (since 19...♖xd5 runs into 20.♖e8+ ♗f8 21.♘e4).



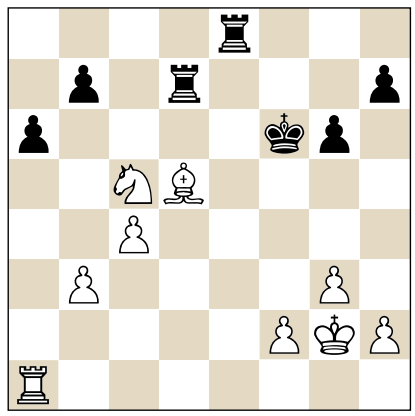
19...♗xc3? A blunder! I should play 19...♗f8, when after 20.♖e5 ♗e6 (and not 20...♗xc5 21.♖dxd5 ♖xd5 22.♖e8+ ♗f8 23.♗xd5 – a funny instance where Black can't escape both pins!) 21.♘xb7 ♖d7 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 again the doubled pawns give Black some saving chances.

20.bxc3 ♗e6



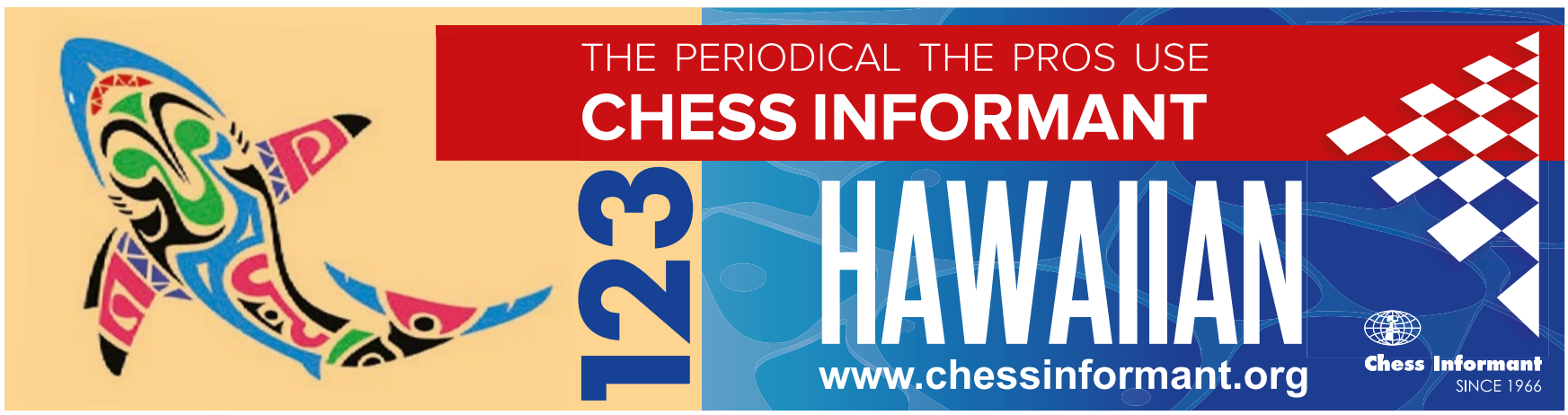
Hurray, the bishop is finally out... Only to perish on the next move.

21.♖xe6 fxe6 22.♘xe6 ♖d6 23.♗xd5 ♔h8 24.c4 ♖e8 25.♘d4 ♖d7 26.♔g2 ♔g7 27.♖a1 a6 28.♘e6+ ♔f6 29.♘c5

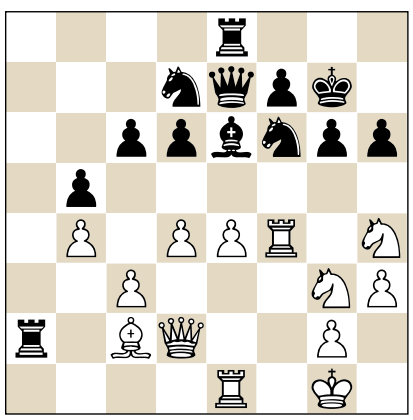


Black resigned. I didn't play well, but Ding was merciless in the execution! Lesson to be learnt from this game: don't go on an excursion with the queen without developing your pieces ☺!

Also I noticed that in many of his games, even in worse positions, Ding Liren would fight on with unbelievable accuracy, his tenacity allowing him to even turn the tables in his favour

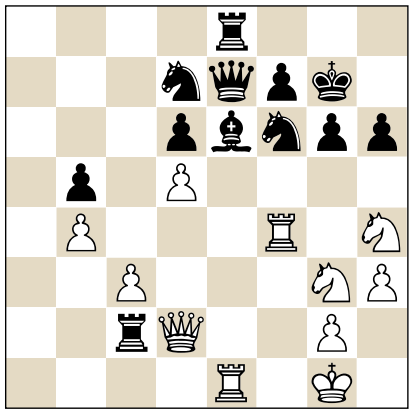


(maybe this is partly due to the fact that he is the modern expert on the KID?).

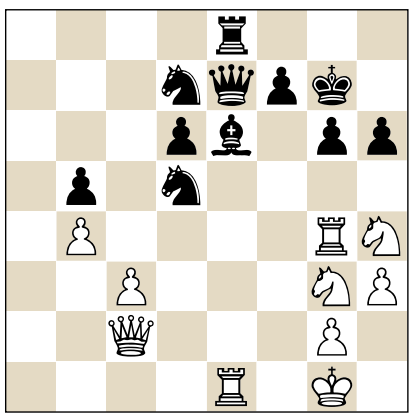


S.P.Sethuraman-Ding Liren
Hyderabad 2015 (8)
position after 31...♖a2

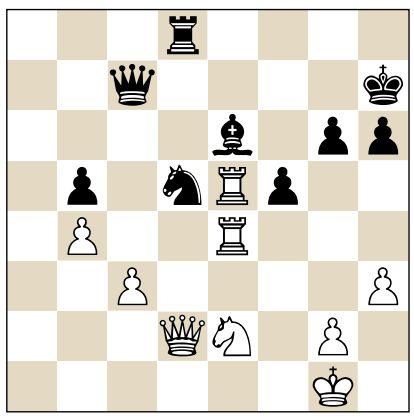
Ding's last move was a huge error, allowing White to crash through with
32.d5! cxd5 33.exd5 ♖xc2
The only way.



34.♕xc2 ♘xd5 35.♖g4
When I saw this position, I felt White should be able to win, but Ding managed to find the most accurate moves, forcing White to find the only moves to maintain his advantage.

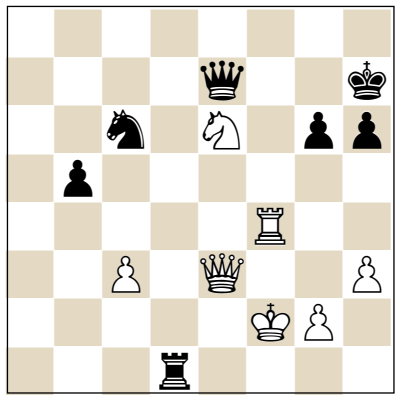


35...♔h8! 36.♕d2
The comp gives 36.♖xg6! ♕xh4 37.♖e4 ♕xe4 38.♕xe4 fxg6 39.♕xg6 ♖e7 40.♕xh6+ as winning for White, which of course wasn't easy to assess as better for White!
36...♔h7 37.♘f3 ♘e5! 38.♘xe5 dxe5 39.♖xe5 ♕c7 40.♖ge4 ♖d8 41.♘e2 f5!
Unbelievably, White has to give back the exchange!



42.♖xe6
After 42.♖e3 ♘xe3 43.♕xe3, White still has some advantage, but the worst is over for Black.
42...fxe4 43.♖xe4 ♘xb4 44.♘d4 ♘c6 45.♕e3 ♖d7 46.♘e6 ♖d1+ 47.♔f2 ♕f7+ 48.♖f4 ♕e7!

Adhiban Baskaran vs. Ding Liren (½-1½): 'After analysing his games many times I realised that the engine just didn't understand his play ☺.'

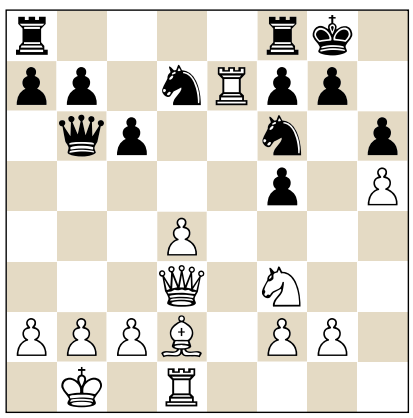


Ding has managed to survive the onslaught and even went on to win when White started to over-push.

Wei Yi

Could we describe **Wei Yi** as 'The Fastest Chinese'? Aged just 15, and the youngest competitor in the summit match, he's emerging as one of Beijing's great hopes for a first Chinese world title challenger. While preparing for him, I came across one of his games from 2012, and just guess what his rating was at the time? A modest 2300!! Now he is the youngest-ever 2700 player – and in the span of just three years, which is definite proof of his tremendous growth! So what did you eat in those

intervening years, Mr. Wei Yi? Personally, I think his games consist of a nice dose of attacking flair combined with excellent technique! Let's have a look at one of his games from Hyderabad. Facing an innovation, Wei Yi showed strong play and deep calculation in reaching an overwhelming position.

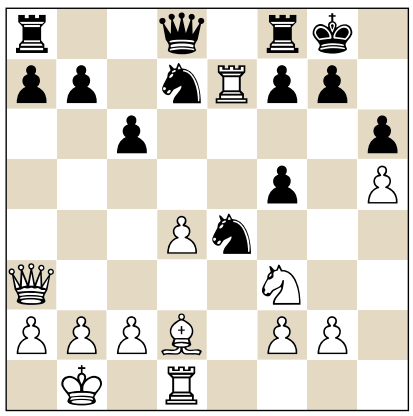


Wei Yi -S.P.Sethuraman
Hyderabad 2015 (2)
position after 16.♖xe7

16...♕d8 A well-known position from the Caro-Kann. **17.♕a3!?**

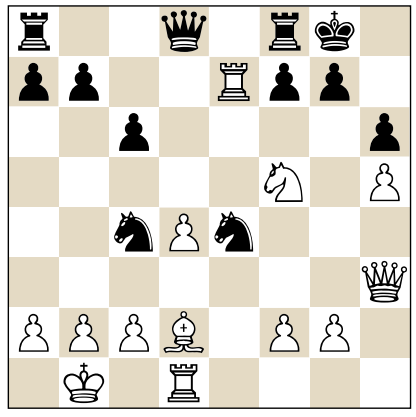
> 'So what did you eat in those intervening years, Mr. Wei Yi?'

Taking the game into unexplored territory. **17...♘e4** Black unleashes a novelty, but Wei is ready for it.

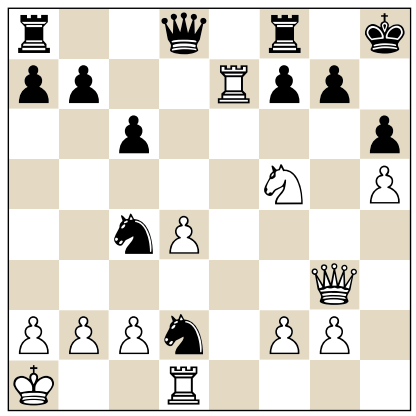


Krishnan Sasikiran had a tough time against 15-year-old Wei Yi (½-1½), 'The Fastest Chinese' and Beijing's great hope for a first Chinese world title challenger.

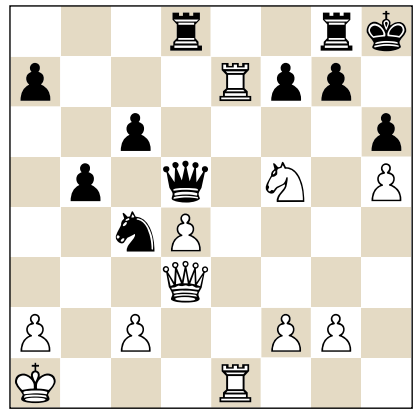
18.♘h4 ♘b6 19.♘xf5 ♘c4 20.♕h3



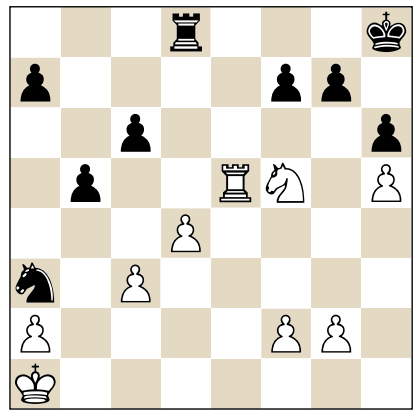
20...♘exd2+ From here on White was on his own. 20...♘cxd2+ is apparently the critical line and one which was analysed by Wei Yi.
21.♔a1 ♔h8 22.♕g3!
The following sequence of moves is really impressive, even the comp agrees!



22...♖g8 23.b3 ♕d5 24.♕d3! b5 25.bxc4 ♘xc4 26.♖de1 ♖ad8



27.♕e4!
After the exchange of queens White is clearly on top!
27...♘a3 28.♕xd5 ♖xd5 29.♖1e5 ♖gd8 30.c3 ♖xe5 31.♖xe5



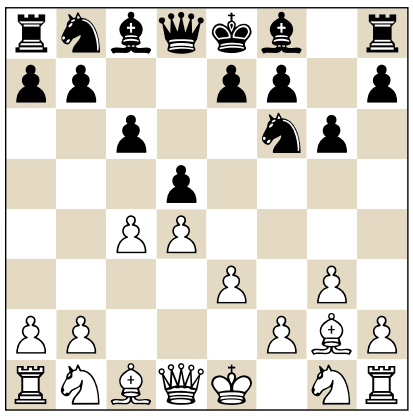
With a clear advantage for White.

S.P. Sethuraman

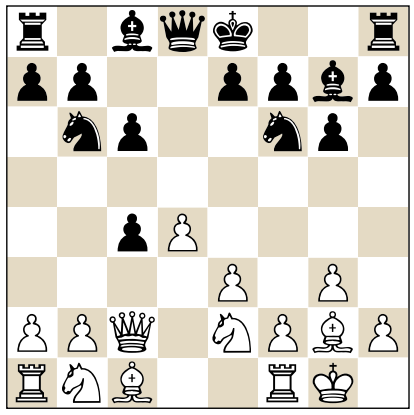
Let's take a closer look at the Indian side. **S.P. Sethuraman**, 'The Invincible', was one of the major contributors to our medal-winning finish at the Tromsø Olympiad, with a 2750 performance. Sethu has recently become a 'team tournament tycoon' on whom we can always rely to deliver when needed. He's become an extremely confident team-player, with very few losses in recent events. Apart from his stellar performance on second board at the Olympiad, he's also the reigning Indian national champion and a former World U-16 champion. He almost beat Ding 2-0 in their mini-match, so let's take a look now at his best moment in the match. Here Ding was suffering from a case of bad development, and Sethu emerged on top in the ensuing maze of complicated lines.

KI 78.7 – D71
Ding Liren
S.P. Sethuraman
Hyderabad 2015 (7)

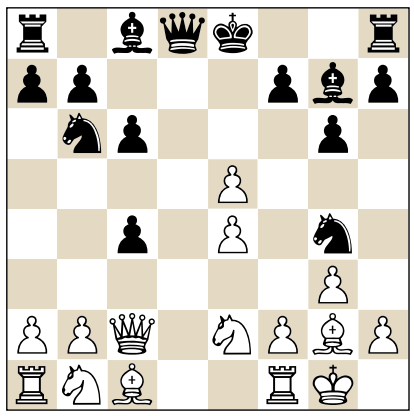
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 d5 5.e3!? An interesting line advocated by Kramnik in his never-ending quest to introduce new systems to our sacred game.



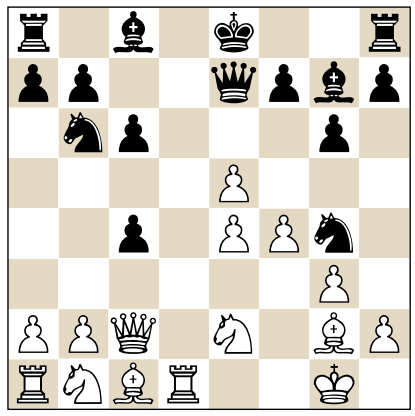
5...dxc4 6.♘e2 ♘bd7!?
A new idea!
7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♕c2 ♘b6
This is the point of Black's 6th move. White is not going to find it easy to win back the pawn.



9.e4 e5!?
An interesting way to complicate things. Now both sides have to be on extremely high alert! Mistakes will prove to be highly costly!
Also possible was 9...0-0, offering an equal game.
10.dxe5 ♘g4

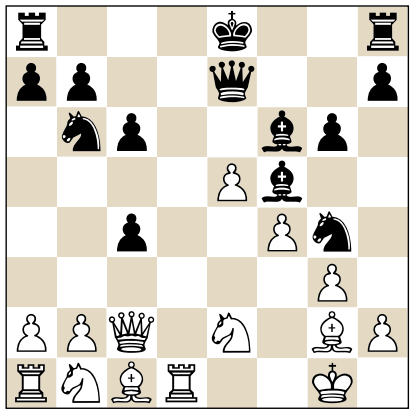


11.♖d1 11.f4 is met by the unexpected but very cool manoeuvre 11...♗f8! 12.♗f3 ♗c5+ 13.♔g2 ♕d3, and Black is slightly better.
11...♕e7 12.f4



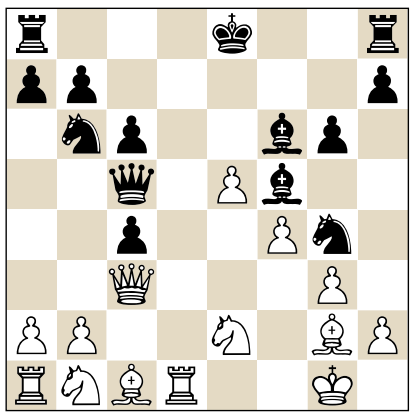
12...f6!? Definitely the best practical choice! Black opens up the position to capitalize on his superior development. The comp's preference is 12...♕c5+ 13.♘d4 (13.♖d4 g5 with a total mess!) 13...♘xe5 14.b4! (14.fxe5 ♗g4, and White is just lost!) 14...♕xb4 15.fxe5 ♗g4 (15...♗xe5 allows White to retain a slight edge after 16.♗f4) 16.♗f3 h5, and after e5 falls, Black will have sufficient compensation for the piece, so unsurprisingly the all-knowing assesses this as 0.00!
13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.e5 ♗f5

Wang Chen, the only IM at the Summit Match, lost ½-1½ to S.P. Sethuraman, 'The Invincible'.



15.♕c3?! Ding starts going astray. 15.♗e4 was the best: 15...♕c5+ 16.♘d4 ♖d8. I guess Ding either assumed Black was fine or didn't check it deeply enough.

15...♕c5+



16.♘d4? Another big error! 16.♖d4! was the only way, although to a human eye White's position looks highly suspect.

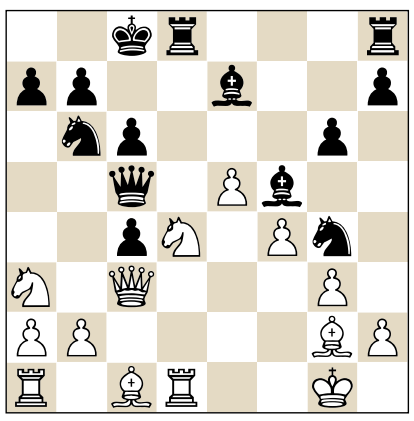
16...♗e7

16...♘a4 followed by ...0-0-0 would have finished the game at once!

17.♘a3

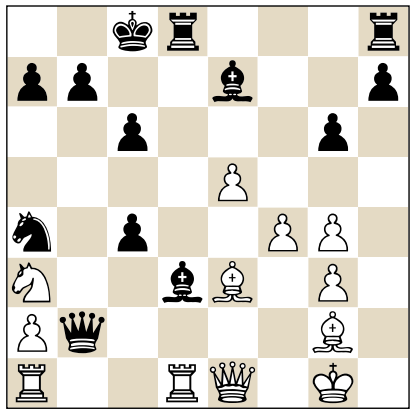
17.b3 was the last salvation attempt.

17...0-0-0 Now it's all over!



18.h3 ♗d3 19.hxg4 ♘a4 20.♕e1 ♕xd4+ 21.♗e3 ♕xb2

The c4-pawn becomes the hero!



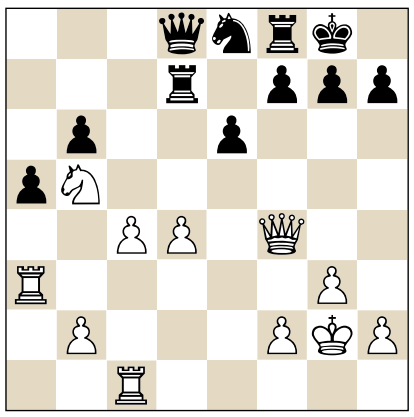
22.♕a5 ♕xa3 23.♗xc6 ♗c5

White resigned. A nice miniature!

M.R. Lalith Babu

'The Grinding Master' of the Indian chess scene is **M.R. Lalith Babu**, who boasts a couple of major achievements during his career, such as becoming Commonwealth Champion and winning a few European tournaments. He has an active/positional style, with a keen tactical eye and ever-ready for wild complications if the position requires it. But more than anything else, the one thing that impresses me most of all is his skill of relentlessly grinding away in equal positions (or, in some cases, worse positions ☺) – he just continues to play for one result, and that is to win! His final-round grind was one of my favourites of the match.

M.R. Lalith Babu 'just continues to play for one result, and that is to win!'



M.R. Lalith Babu-Zhou Jianchao
Hyderabad 2015 (8)
position after 22...♖d7

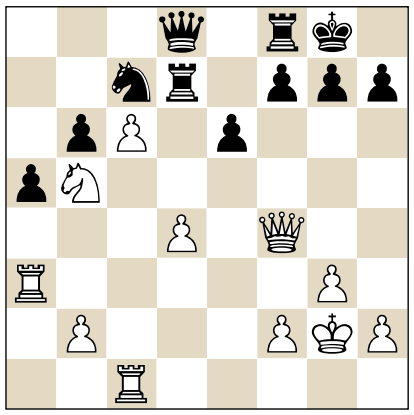
White has been patiently manoeuvring, waiting for his chance, and now he creates a dangerous passed pawn.

23.c5! ♘c7?!

Black, not suspecting White's devilish trap, falls into it.

23...♖d5 would have maintained the equilibrium.

24.c6!

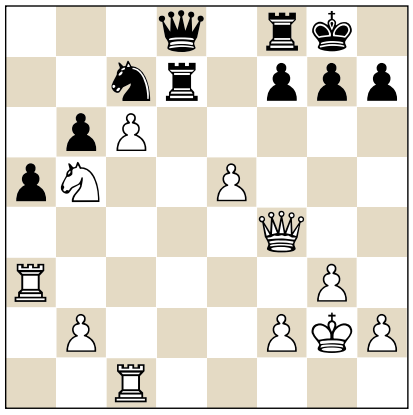


24...e5

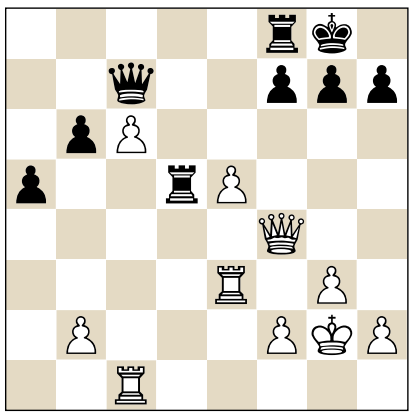
Hoping to confuse the issue, but White keeps his cool.

24...♘xb5 25.cxd7 ♘xa3 26.♕c7!, and the d-pawn queens.

25.dxe5!



25...♖d5
25...♘xb5 26.cxd7 ♘xa3 27.e6 is an even more impressive winning line!
26.♘xc7 ♕xc7 27.♖e3



And White won soon after.

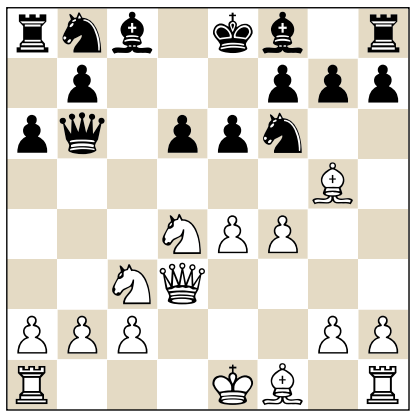
Adhiban Baskaran

And could I, **Adhiban Baskaran**, be best described as 'The Unstoppable Force'?! Until 2013, my career was more or less static, with my best achievements being a former World U-16 Champion and a former national champion. But since qualifying for the 2013 FIDE World Cup my life has started to change – and my achievements have improved, with a strong showing in that World Cup (reaching the third round), followed by winning the Biel Open and the Barcelona Sants Open in the last two years. But I feel that I have the potential to achieve a lot more – and am confident that my star is just beginning to rise. Here is my own contribution to this article, with an interesting piece of opening preparation in a notorious line, followed by a perfect execution!

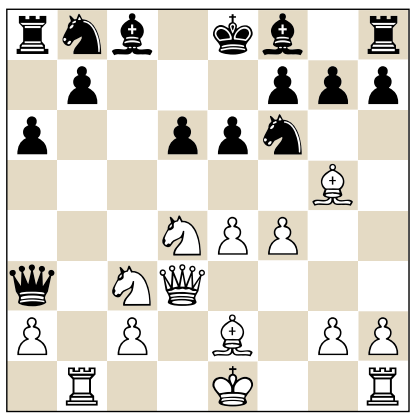
'Our rivalry will continue for the decades to come – and only then perhaps we'll have a definitive answer for Magnus as to just who will dominate the other!'

SI 8.1 – B97
Adhiban Baskaran
Wei Yi
Hyderabad 2015 (3)

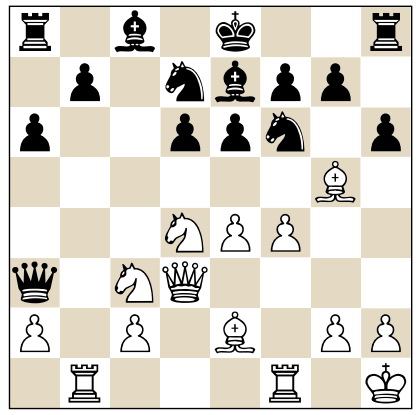
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♕b6 The famous Poisoned Pawn, popularized by Bobby Fischer.
8.♕d3 Not analysed as deeply as 8.♕d2, but not exactly unexplored territory either.



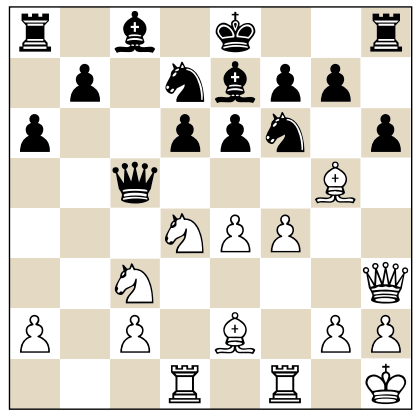
8...♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.♗e2!?
An interesting idea. White just ignores the fact that he is a pawn down and continues to develop his pieces.



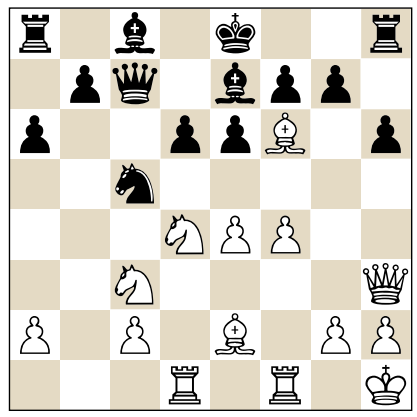
10...♘bd7 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♔h1 h6



13.♕h3! Maintaining the pressure. 13.♗h4, I felt, would be a huge waste of time.
13...♕c5 14.♖bd1



14...♕c7
14...0-0 15.♗xh6 would be disastrous.
15.♗h4 Actually, Black had no threat, but White's potential had reached its limit, so I had to make a move that wouldn't ruin things.
15...♘c5 16.♗xf6! Ironic, since White has just withdrawn the bishop on the previous move. But he had to do something fast before Black completed his development.



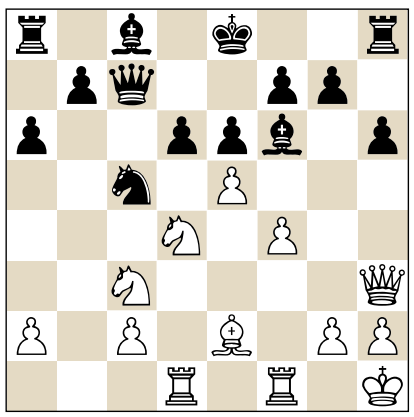
16...♗xf6

Hyderabad 2015

					TPR
1	S.P. Sethuraman	IGM	IND	2623	5	2730
2	Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2755	5	2722
3	M.R. Lalith Babu	IGM	IND	2556	4½	2678
4	Wei Yi	IGM	CHN	2706	4½	2670
5	Wang Chen	IM	CHN	2500	4½	2670
6	Zhou Jianchao	IGM	CHN	2578	4	2627
7	Adhiban Baskaran	IGM	IND	2646	2½	2494
8	Krishnan Sasikiran	IGM	IND	2682	2	2442
Overall result India-China: 14-18						

16...gxf6 17.f5 doesn't look nice for Black either.

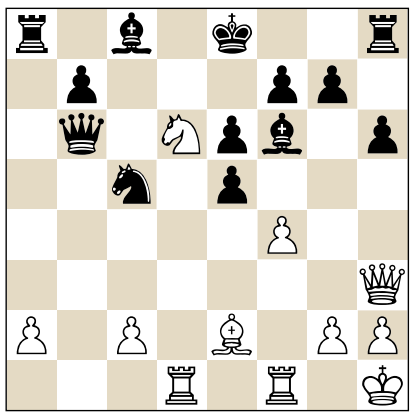
17.e5!



17...dxe5

After 17...♗d8 18.exd6 ♕d7 19.f5 e5 20.♕e3 White has a clear advantage.

18.♘db5 axb5 19.♘xb5 ♕b6 20.♘d6+



20...♔e7

20...♕xd6 was probably the lesser evil: 21.♖xd6 exf4 (21...0-0 22.♕e3) 22.♖xf4 (22.♗b5+ ♔e7) 22...♗e5 23.♗b5+ ♔e7 24.♖xf7+! ♔xf7 (24...♔xd6 25.♕e3, and White wins due to the threat of ♕d2+, against which Black has no satisfactory defence) 25.♕h5+ ♔f6 26.♖d1, with a winning attack.

20...♔f8 was definitely better than the game continuation, but after 21.fxe5 ♘d7 22.exf6 ♘xf6 23.♗h5! White has a devastating attack!

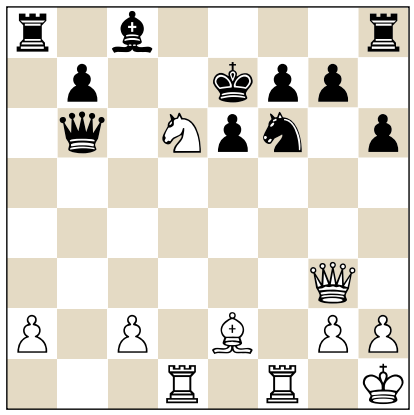
21.fxe5 ♘d7

Black cannot take the pawn, 21...♗xe5, as White then crashes through with 22.♖xf7+ ♔d8 23.♘c4+.

22.exf6+ ♘xf6

After 22...gxf6 White wins with 23.♕g3.

23.♕g3



Adhiban 'The Unstoppable Force' Baskaran: 'Here we come!'

NEW IN CHESS

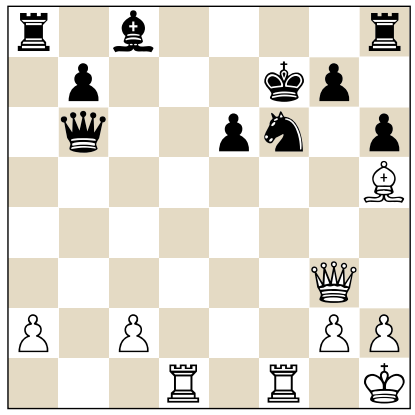
23...♔f8

After 23...♖g8 24.♖xf6 ♔xf6 25.♕f4+ ♔g6 26.♕xf7+ ♔h7 27.♗d3+ ♔h8 28.♕g6 is a nice finish.

24.♘xf7!

Wrapping up the game in style!

24...♔xf7 25.♗h5+



Black resigned in view of 25...♔f8 26.♕g6 ♕c7 27.♖xf6+ gxf6 28.♕xf6+, with mate to follow.

My own thoughts on the culmination of the clash was that India started off pretty well and indeed we were in the lead after three rounds – but then China woke up and began to take the match very seriously. They then showed great resilience, with a strong showing on all boards, turning in a true team performance to win the remaining rounds and the match. But our rivalry has only just begun, and it will continue for the decades to come – and only then perhaps we'll have a definitive answer for Magnus as to just who will dominate the other!

In a footnote to this article, while reading the *Just Checking* column in this magazine, the question that always interested me most of all is 'What will be the nationality of the 2050 Chess World Champion?'. Very rarely do I get to see India mentioned. But I feel now we are slowly beginning to reach our own summit within the international arena, and I will begin to see India mentioned more often, as our aforementioned young talents rise up the rankings.

So, a friendly warning to the readers: Here we come! ■

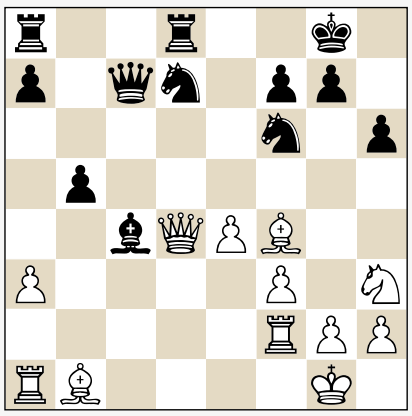
MAXIMize your Tactics

with Maxim Notkin

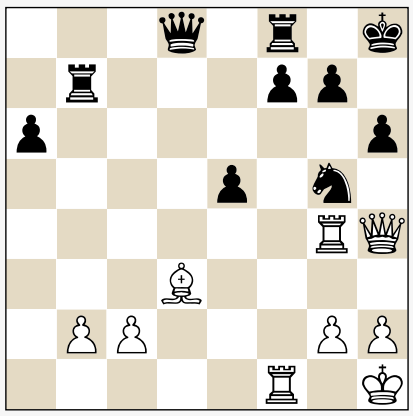
NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

Find the best move in the positions below

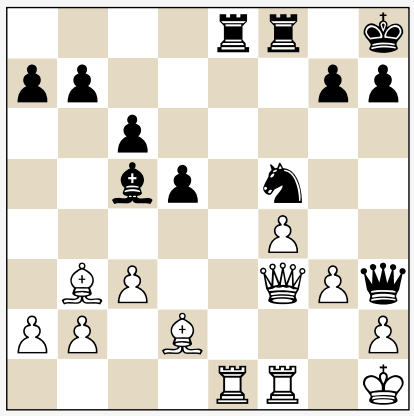
Solutions on page 83



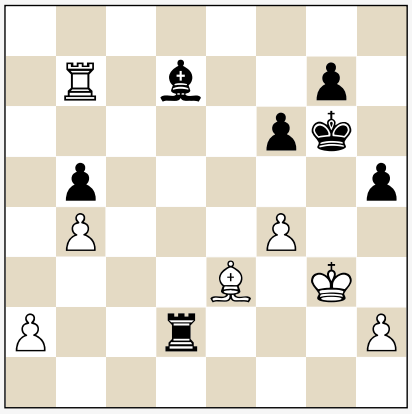
1. Black to move



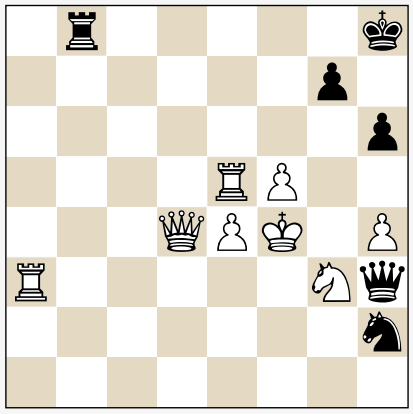
2. White to move



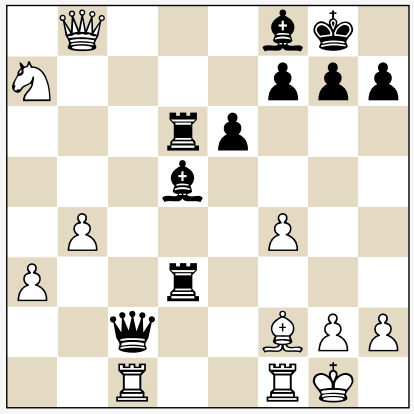
3. Black to move



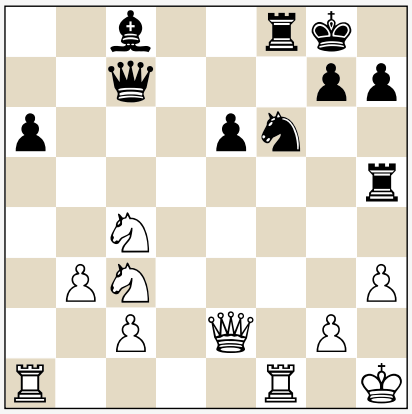
4. Black to move



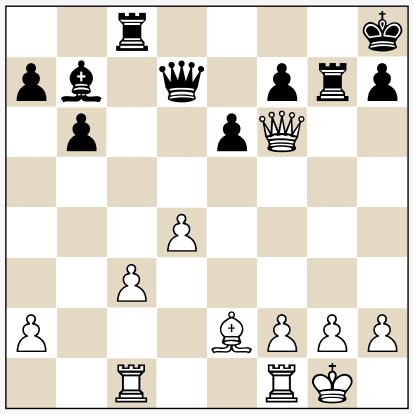
5. White to move



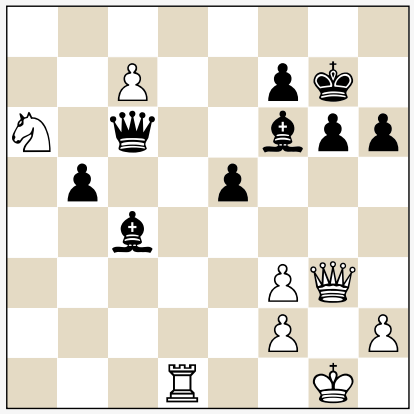
6. Black to move



7. Black to move



8. Black to move



9. White to move

Hans Ree

Watching Kasparov on the war path

In Tilburg, where he once excelled as a chess player, Garry Kasparov gave a lecture for the Nexus Institute. The next day he was interviewed on Dutch TV. Though **Hans Ree** does not share his political view that attack is the best defence, he was impressed by his presentation.

'Did you see Kasparov?', asked a member of my tennis club. 'What a brilliant speaker. And such a sharp vision.' Kasparov had given a lecture in Tilburg, the Dutch city where he had won several super-tournaments in the past, and the next day he was interviewed for the Dutch TV program *Buitenhof*, a platform for serious political discussion.

I said that Kasparov's vision, unchanged for the last 15 years, had always been that the U.S. should act with all its force everywhere in the world, and I mentioned his article for the *Wall Street Journal* from August 2002, during the run-up to the American invasion of Iraq. There he had written that the war against terrorism should not stop at Baghdad: 'But offense comes first. Baghdad remains the first stop but not the last. We must also have plans for Tehran and Damascus, not to mention Riyadh.' Just like today when he speaks about Putin, in 2002 Kasparov also built his case on comparisons with Hitler and the weak response to him in the years before the Second World War.

'In retrospect, Kasparov was probably right,' said my fellow club member. Was he? In retrospect we know that in the years following the campaign against Saddam, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives and millions became refugees. Should this disaster really have been exported to other countries?

Even at the time of his writing, Kasparov's target list – Baghdad, Tehran, Damascus and Riyadh – had been a bit strange. Gaddafi's Tripoli was strangely omitted, although it might have fallen under Kasparov's portmanteau expression 'and elsewhere'.

And what about Riyadh? Indeed, Saudi Arabia was and is ruled by an abominable regime, but it was an ally of the U.S. and the Houses of Bush and Saud were connected by strong ties. By attacking Riyadh, Bush would have done the work for Bin Laden, who considered Saudi Arabia an American colony. But such details may not carry much weight for a man with a vision.

A dangerous place

But indeed, Kasparov had been an eloquent speaker in his interview for Dutch TV. I knew more or less what to expect. Hitler, Munich 1938, Putin a dangerous criminal. I also knew some of his stock jokes. But I was still impressed by his performance. The jokes were expertly delivered and so was his general argument, that Putin was the most dangerous man in history, a far more dangerous threat than even Hitler and Stalin had been because of his nuclear weapons.

I could relate to that, as in my view every modern world leader might be the most dangerous man in history. From when I was a child I have thought that my end would come in a nuclear war, a thought that normally recedes to the background and only occasionally re-emerges. I used to dream about it sometimes. An announcement on the radio that missiles have been launched, and then, as in a futuristic film, a big blue hatch opens in the sky, a window of opportunity you might say, through which the bombs will fall. When Kasparov speaks about people in the West who have lost their sense of peril, he is not speaking about me.

So, in a way I am surprised that I am still alive. We may have been close to nuclear war during the Cuba crisis of 1962, but all in all, the world's leaders have shown admirable restraint, more than I would have credited them with. Would an average person, or I myself for that matter, have been capable of the same restraint for more than half a century? Would Bobby Fischer?

The world is dangerous and Putin is a kleptocrat and a tyrant, but I think Kasparov lays too much blame on him. Last year he even hinted that

the ISIS campaign might have been a consequence of Putin's annexation of Crimea. But Putin is not even the sole culprit for the terrible events in Ukraine. The U.S. and the EU have played their role too; they opened a Pandora's Box when they supported a violent anti-Russian coup in 2014. Probably no Russian leader would have left that unanswered, even if he had been a liberal democrat.

A different view

The September/October 2014 issue of the American magazine *Foreign Affairs* had an article by the political scientist John Mearsheimer entitled 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the Fault of the West.' The gist of his argument can be distilled from two quotes that were highlighted by *Foreign Affairs*: 'U.S. and European leaders blundered in attempting to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border' and 'Imagine the outrage if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it.'

The next issue of *Foreign Affairs* had two critical answers to Mearsheimer's article, with a final reply by himself.

Mearsheimer is considered to be a proponent of the realistic school in political science, as opposed to the idealistic school, which describes politics as a clash between values and principles. I think this idealistic school must be stronger in academe than among practical politicians. Imagine a White House conference where the President would tell his staff that he intended to make the world safe for liberty and democracy. It would strike us as a scene from an old-fashioned comedy. Mr. Smith goes to Washington, or something along those lines. They don't make such innocent comedies anymore.

I am sure that Kasparov would compare Mearsheimer's realism with the 'realism' of those Europeans who in the years before WW II cherished the illusion that Hitler was a normal politician who could be handled by normal means. What is realism to one person, is naivety to another.

> 'The world is dangerous and Putin is a kleptocrat and a tyrant, but I think Kasparov lays too much blame on him. Last year he even hinted that the ISIS campaign might have been a consequence of Putin's annexation of Crimea.'

What to do?

Kasparov played a home game on Dutch TV. In its press release the network wrote that Kasparov would think 10 moves ahead during the broadcast. The interviewer was not just polite, but positively reverential.

Naturally the question was asked what our answer should be, given that we are supposed to be confronted with the most dangerous man in human history. Not an answer but a strategy, said Kasparov, by which I think he meant that it would be a long-term project.

A strategy then. Kasparov advocated arming Ukraine as a start, and making it clear to the Russians that Putin will always be unacceptable to the civilized world and that the economic situation in Russia can only decline as long as he stays in power. Then we could hope that Putin will be toppled by his inner circle. And presumably that his successor will be nicer.

What else could he have said? Despite the inclusion of military support for Ukraine, it seemed a moderate enough proposal by Kasparov's standards, but hardly commensurate with his apocalyptic vision of Putin as a monster who would rather unleash a nuclear war on the world than relinquish power. Suddenly the difference between Kasparov's strategy and Obama's seemed one of degree rather than principle.

But Kasparov is always ridiculing and denigrating Obama, and he obviously wants to play a role in internal American affairs as well as in world politics. Here is an example, a tweet from 2014: 'Have to share a friend's joke, "They should take all the Lenin statues they just tore down in Ukraine & put them up at Obamacare centers!".'

What did he mean? Obamacare enrolment centres really exist and are places where people can sign up for health insurance – apparently a dangerous Communist practice.

When Kasparov was speaking about the lesson he had learned from history – always the same lesson – it would have been inappropriate for the interviewer to go into his endorsements, around the year 2000, of the bizarre New Chronology theory that holds that written human history started at 800 A.D. and that for instance the Greek and Roman civilisations never existed.

On Edward Winter's website, a page is devoted to Kasparov's involvement with that quaint theory, and it was there that I found a link to an article from 2001 by a reporter of the British newspaper *Telegraph*. I was surprised to read that even then Kasparov was already predicting his retirement from professional chess in five years' time. About the New Chronology he said: 'When I stop playing chess, it may well be that I concentrate on promoting these ideas. I believe that they can improve our lives.'

It would have been a formidable task, and what's more, quite harmless. ■

With a sweeping victory in Tbilisi, **Evgeny Tomashevsky** has taken the overall lead in the 2014-15 Grand Prix cycle. The Russian looks poised to claim one of the two qualification spots for the next Candidates' tournament, but is understandably reluctant to discuss his chances with one more GP to go. What the grandmaster from Saratov doesn't mind is showing our readers his impressive wins – in fact thrilling short stories – against two direct rivals.

When reality exceeds the boldest expectations

So, that's my score now after the two Grand Prix tournaments I've played in: 8 out of 11 in Tbilisi, a total combined with the first GP in Baku of 14 out of 22, in other words +6 –0=16 with an average opponent rating of around 2750… It would be worth reflecting slightly longer on these dry statistics, were it not for the forthcoming, decisive fourth stage of the 2014/15 FIDE Grand Prix in Khanty-Mansiysk in May. To discuss my own achievement now in detail, with wide-ranging conclusions, would be equivalent to talking about victory in an individual tournament after a triumphal start. It is obvious that, depending on whether or not I qualify for the Candidates' Tournament, the 'resonance' both of the afore-mentioned figures and of my thoughts regarding this will be completely different. Therefore, as regards the results of the tournament in Tbilisi, I will endeavour to restrict myself to those important factors, on which the result in Khanty and the series as a whole will have little influence.

First of all, I should like to congratulate the organizers on a splendid tournament. For various reasons it is possible that not all will share my delighted mood, but I cannot think of anything to criticize: a 5-star hotel in the centre of a beautiful, distinctive city, convenient logistics (the playing hall on the floor below the guest rooms), and all the participants' requests promptly and efficiently met. I have already expressed many times my warm attitude to Georgia and Georgian culture. In general I like playing in countries that are small territorially, which are significant chess powers and which also have a rich

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historical and cultural heritage. In contrast to many correspondents, I do not see any problems with the venues for the first three tournaments of the current Grand Prix (Baku, Tashkent, Tbilisi): in my opinion, in each of these three cities the tournament was perceived and organized as a genuine chess festival.

Of course, in such an atmosphere it was especially pleasant to play well and achieve an excellent result! It is understandable that in the given instance reality exceeded the boldest expectations, although even before the tournament my trainer and second, grandmaster Alexey Ilyushin and I were quite optimistic. There were reasons for this: two months of comprehensive preparation for the event, by no means restricted to chess, good expectations from being in Georgia, and finally, the successful experience of the first stage of the series in Baku, where I shared 3rd-7th place.

It has so happened that, for quite a long time now, beginning with the 2013 World Cup, I have been much more successful in opposing elite players and those close to them, than in performing in mixed tournaments. It is possibly a matter of the personal features of my style, or simply that was how things worked out at a specific period of time, but I should like to dwell on this factor in more detail. In my view, the rising overall standard of play, the development of theory and the ready access to information has led to a significant reduction in the gaps in the mastery and strength between the different levels of the chess 'pyramid'. Nevertheless, the system of events, especially commercial ones, has not managed to change

Evgeny Tomashevsky: 'Beginning with the 2013 World Cup, I have been much more successful in opposing elite players and those close to them, than in performing in mixed tournaments.'

in accordance with these tendencies. Whereas there is still a competitive 'window' to the official FIDE tournaments, in the major closed 'all-play-alls' it is mainly always the same players. As a result, many successful players in the 2700-2750 range do not gain enough opportunities to show their worth at the highest level (try to remember, for example, how many super-tournaments have been played in the past few years by regular top-25 (!) players such as Dmitry Jakovenko and Nikita Vitiugov). On the other hand – some of the elite, in their constant 'intestine battles' are without great competitive motivation, and sometimes appear to be losing their stimulus. Carlsen's domination, and isolated striking victories by other representatives, enable the elite to maintain the status quo. On the whole, I think, the greater the number of major events that are held with the widest possible qualification (in special tournaments or with a more 'dynamic' rating, such as that in tennis), the more fair and interesting it will be. But for the moment, instead of this, projects such as a 'Golden League' (the new tournament cycle comprising Norway Chess, the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis and the London Chess Classic – ed.) for fewer than a dozen chosen ones are proposed, merely aggravating the problem and looking absurd in a situation of crazy rivalry (the exception being Magnus), when between the first and second players the rating difference is greater than that between the second and the eighteenth! However, my 'lyrical digression' has dragged out, and such a question demands a more detailed discussion and a wide exchange of views.

Specifically in Tbilisi, the elite representatives did not shine. It is hard to say what this was associated with; I think that each case must be considered separately. Thus it would appear that the brilliant young players Anish Giri and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who possess wonderful mastery and are continuing to develop and regularly compete in closed tournaments with the best of the best, sometimes lack experience in fierce competitive battles. So not for the first time they have rather 'lost their way' in the Grand Prix series, and have failed to pick up 'their' expected points. In our game, from the purely chess point of view Giri fully dictated his conditions, and only great tenacity enabled me to achieve my aim. But I was even more surprised by the failure of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and especially Alexander Grischuk, for whom I have enormous respect and whom I consider to be undoubtedly one of the best players in the world. It is the two games with these grandmasters that I would like to present to the readers. They came in succession, in Rounds 3 and 4, after I had made a favourable start to the tournament (1½ out of 2).

> 'Some of the elite, in their constant 'intestine battles' are without great competitive motivation, and sometimes appear to be losing their stimulus.'

KI 20.5 – E90
Evgeny Tomashevsky
Alexander Grischuk
Tbilisi 2015 (3)

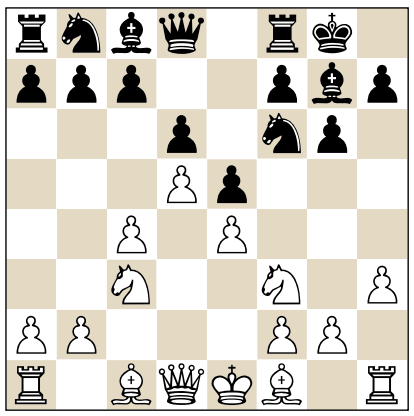
After my successful start it was important to build on this success in a game against one of my most awkward opponents: with rare exceptions, my previous meetings with the Muscovite had brought nothing but disillusionment with Black, and with White – a sharp battle where all three results were possible, but ending in a draw.

My opponent's choice of the King's Indian Defence was not difficult to guess, but the fact that this game was merely the second of five (!) of mine against this opening in Tbilisi was practically impossible to anticipate…

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6

In the first round Baadur Jobava preferred against me the comparatively rare line with 4...0-0 5.♘f3 c6.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d5

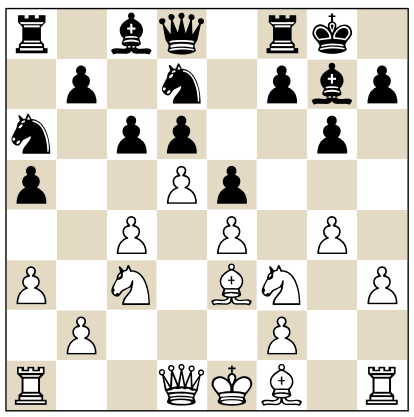


7...a5 But Giri, Kasimdzhanov and Radjabov defended here with 7...♘h5.

8.g4 ♘a6 9.♗e3 ♘d7 10.a3

One of the 'tabiyas' of the variation.

10...c6!? A novelty! Despite spending so much time analysing this entire system with Alexey Ilyushin, at the board I had to deal with a new idea in a well-known position…



11.♖g1

After quite a substantial think I decided that Black's plan was to create tension on the queenside before placing one of his knights on c5. And indeed, it often happens that the arrangement of the knights on d7 and c5 proves insufficiently flexible, while

in the event of the a6-c5 arrangement, which is more harmonious for playing ...f7-f5, the 'leading' knight comes under attack by b2-b4, and therefore Black tries in advance to weaken the effect of this advance. Sometimes it is also important to deny the opponent a possible ♗e3xc5 after an eventual ...f5-f4. Quite a number of pluses, but at the same time White is afforded time for the development of his play, and the typical rook move, aimed at the preparation of h3-h4 and also prophylaxis against ...f7-f5 and ♗f6 in reply to ♘d2, looks very natural.

I hardly looked at 11.dxc6 ♘dc5 – it is too risky to allow the black knights the e6-square. However, the immediate 11.♘d2!? was also possible, exploiting the fact that, as my opponent pointed out after the game, 11...♗f6 is dubious in view of 12.h4! ♗xh4 13.♕f3 ♗g5? (better is 13...♗e7) 14.♕h3 h6 15.♘f3! ♗xe3 16.fxe3, with attack.

11...♖b8

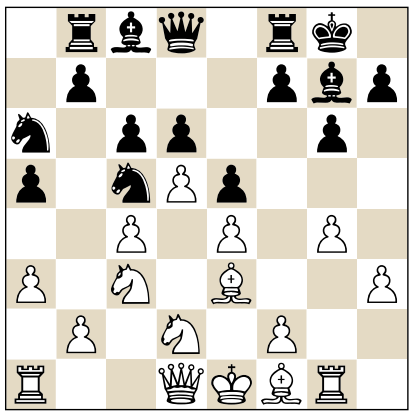
The position after 11...♘ac5 could also have been obtained by the usual move order, while if 11...♘dc5?! again there is 12.b4, and everything else is now rather inadvisable.

12.♘d2

The natural continuation.

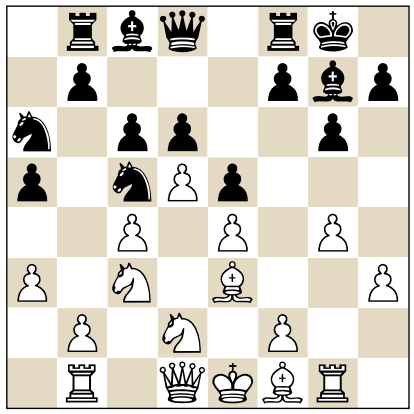
If 12.h4, Black was probably intending the logical continuation of his plan – 12...♘dc5 13.h5 cxd5 14.cxd5 b5!? (or first 14...♗d7).

12...♘dc5



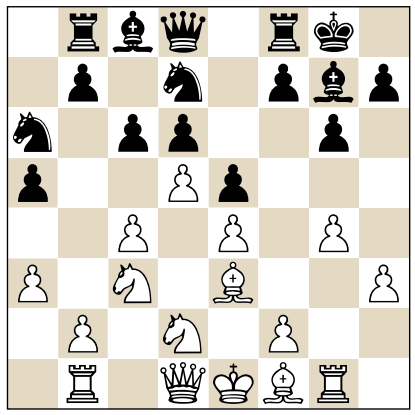
13.♖b1!

More or less necessary, in order to retain the option of b2-b4. Now another idea of Black, even deeper than those listed above, comes to light: to deny the opponent the option of castling queenside. Even so, from the outcome of the game and later analysis, I do not think that in this way Black solves his opening problems. White's spatial advantage will never disappear, and the opponent's counterplay develops too slowly to reach the king on e1. However, during the game, after encountering a new plan and spending a considerable time in thought, I was not so optimistic… Fortunately, here Grischuk also began spending a lot of time.



13...♘d7!?

A very interesting manoeuvre, which should not be evaluated only in terms of numbers on the screen. The black pieces now stand quite well and are ready to counter different active tries by the opponent, who has been denied the right to castle. White is invited to 'declare his intentions', which is not so easy to do… However, objectively such a loss of time is dubious, and this could have been demonstrated.



14.♕f3 Not a bad move, but intuition suggested to me that there should be something better.

I was unable to calculate fully the strongest move 14.h4! (simply continuing my play), although its justification is not difficult: 14...♕xh4?! 15.g5 f5 16.♖g3! f4 17.♘f3!. I overlooked the fact that after ♖h3-h4 Black's queen is trapped and he does not gain sufficient compensation, but this means that he has to reject the win of the pawn and go totally onto the defensive.

14...♘dc5

The knight returns to its best position.

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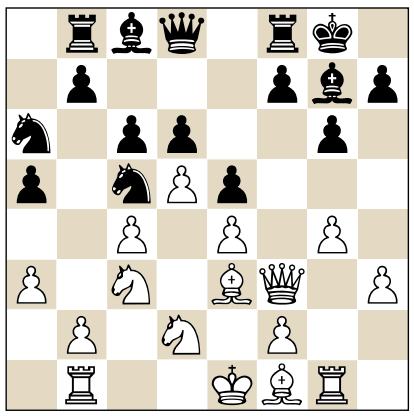
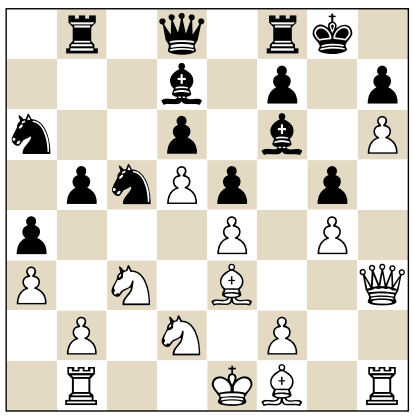
Top-seed Alexander Grischuk (2810) had to content himself with 9th place in Tbilisi, while 2013 World Cup finalist Dmitry Andreikin even finished in bottom place.



15.♕d1

An interesting moment in the game, which was quite heatedly discussed by chess enthusiasts. At first sight the two sides' manoeuvres look absurd! But let's try looking more deeply into the position.

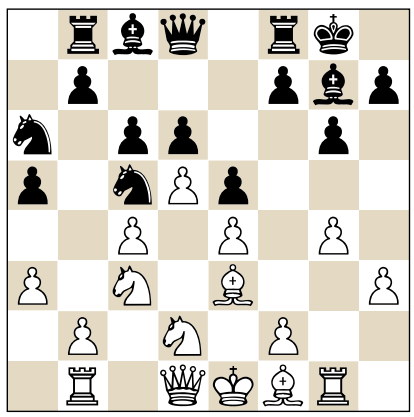
I was very concerned about the opponent's natural plan with ...a5-a4, ...♗d7, the exchange on d5 and ...b7-b5-b4. This was why I avoided the obvious 15.h4 a4 16.h5 ♗d7 17.♖h1 cxd5 18.cxd5 b5 19.♕h3 g5 20.h6 ♗f6.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Although White's play has brought him appreciable positional dividends, it has come to a standstill, whereas ...b5-b4 is now on the agenda. And I am not at all sure that the initially high computer evaluation will help White in variations such as 21.♗e2 b4 22.axb4 ♖xb4 23.f3 ♖d4! – Black carries out a classical flank breakthrough and suddenly develops a strong initiative. Generally speaking, in this strategically complex variation the cost of an inaccuracy for both sides is very high, and it may not immediately become apparent.

After the straightforward 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♘d7 Black wants to play c6-c5 and obtain, at last, good long-term prospects for his knights. In view of this, I decided to withdraw my queen and offer my opponent a complicated choice.

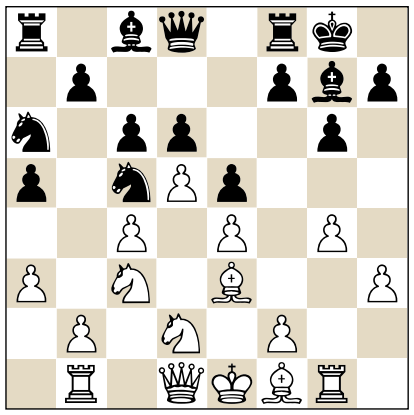


15...♖a8

A bold decision, leaving himself little more than 20 minutes for the 25 moves to the time control against 43 for his opponent.

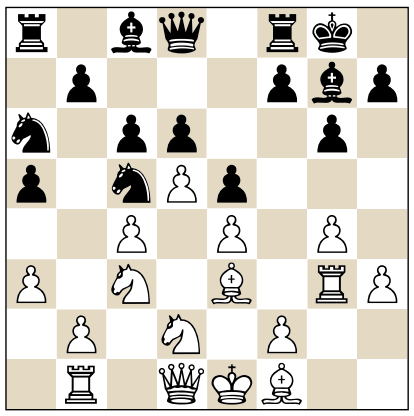
After 15...♘d7 (continuing to wait and play with fire) Alexander considered his position to be dangerous in the variation with ♕f3 and h3-h4.

What would I have done after the return of the knight? Possibly I would have fully calculated 16.h4!, but most probably I would have agreed to the repetition in view of the variations given in the previous note…



16.♖g3

A good move. I made the rook manoeuvre quite quickly and on general grounds, in accordance with the typical motifs of the variation, simply regarding it as a good way of coordinating my forces and preparing h3-h4. Here it is appropriate to recall the well-known notion that good moves often help in the implementation of not only those ideas for the sake of which they are made.



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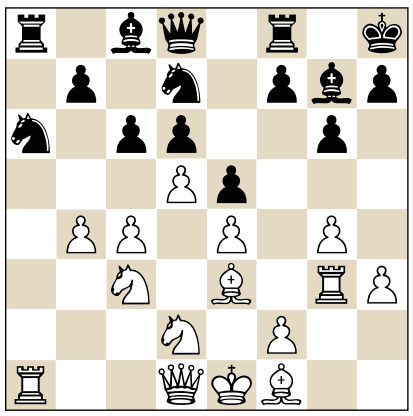
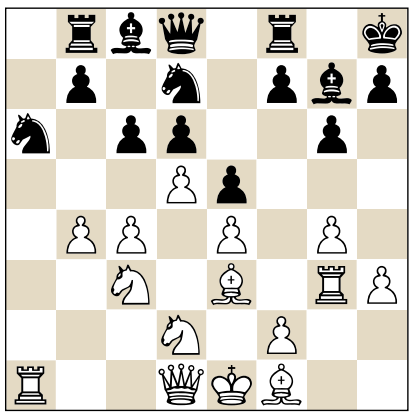
16...♔h8
In his review of my King's Indian battles on the website of the Russian Chess Federation, GM Dmitry Kryakvin labelled this move a mistake and suggested instead 16...♗f6!?. It is probable that this is indeed somewhat stronger, but in any case I no longer like Black's position. Apparently his entire opening conception must be deemed risky, and he should at least have demanded of his opponent the difficult 'demonstration' of this fact, by not avoiding the repetition of position.
17.b4
Now is the time!
17...axb4 18.axb4 ♘d7 19.♖a1!

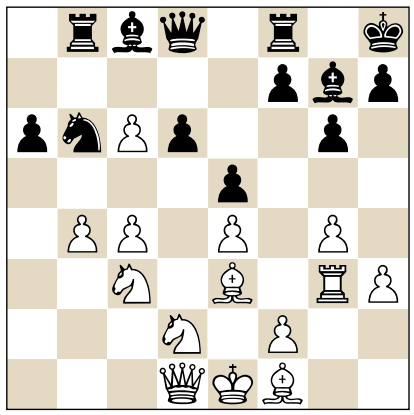


19...♖b8
19...c5 20.b5 ♘c7 leads to a completely cheerless situation for Black: neither of his knights can be activated via the b6-square. But at the same time the possibilities of a tenacious defence are not yet exhausted.
If 19...♘b6, then 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.b5 ♘b4 22.♖xa8 ♘xa8 23.c5! d5 24.♕a4 is strong – Kryakvin.

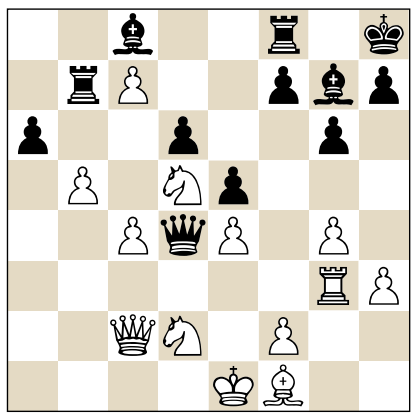


20.♖xa6!
This sacrifice was also highly rated by Dmitry, although for some reason it was much easier for me to make it, than to 'substantiate' h3-h4! on the 14th or 16th move.
20...bxa6
20...cxd5? 21.♖xd6 d4 22.c5! was totally unsuitable.
21.dxc6 ♘b6
In fact, the situation is still far from clear, although I felt extremely optimistic, due to the aesthetic nature of my own position and my opponent's time-trouble. However, White needs to be very vigilant: after all, he is trying to play for domination while material down and with his king in the centre.

> 'Good moves often help in the implementation of not only those ideas for the sake of which they are made.'

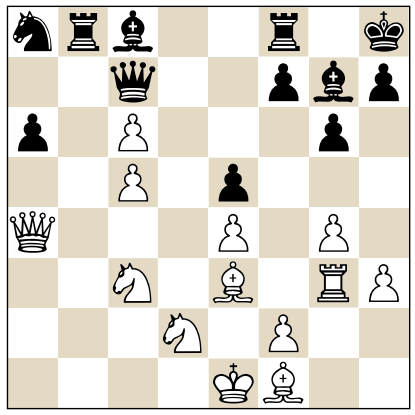


22.♕a1!?
Thematic, but very controversial: White is forced to break up his fine pawn structure. I thought it was more important to prevent the opponent from coordinating his forces, but apparently the direct 22.b5 was stronger, based on tactical subtleties: 22...♕c7 (22...axb5 23.♘xb5!; 22...♗e6 23.♕a1 axb5 24.♕a7!) 23.♗xb6!? ♕xb6 24.♘d5 ♕d4 25.c7 ♖b7 26.♕c2.



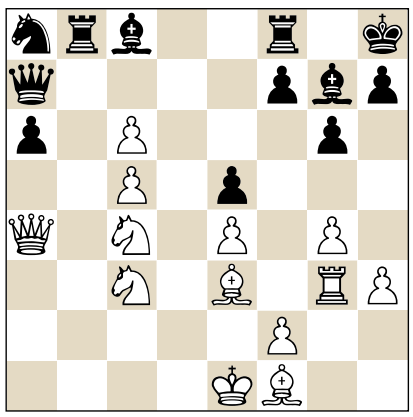
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The computer asserts that in the tactical skirmish after 26...axb5 27.cxb5 f5 28.gxf5 gxf5 29.♘b3 White's trumps are higher, but from the human point of view I now prefer the cool-headed 22.h4!? ♕c7 23.b5 axb5 24.cxb5 ♗e6 25.h5, and White, after neutralizing the counterplay with ...f7-f5 and planning g4-g5 and ♗h3, dominates the entire board.
22...♕c7 23.c5 23.b5 axb5 24.cxb5 ♖a8! allows Black important tempi to set up counterplay.
23...dxc5 24.bxc5 ♘a8 25.♕a4



25...♕a7? Playing such a position is not easy for a player of any standard, especially in severe time-trouble. The desire to bring the a8-knight into play as soon as possible is understandable, but 25...♗e6! was stronger, when White would have to find the 'refined' 26.♗e2!? intending 26...♖fd8 27.♗c4!.
26.♘c4

I also did not have much time left on my clock and I began playing quickly and superficially. The move in the game is not bad in itself, but 26.♘d5! was better, with the terrible threat of c6-c7! Black is practically forced to reply 26...♘c7, on which there follows 27.♕a5! ♘e6 28.c7 ♖b2 29.c6 ♘d4 30.♗d3, with complete 'incarceration', since 30...♘xc6 31.♕a1 ♕b7 32.♘c4 does not help.



26...♗e6!

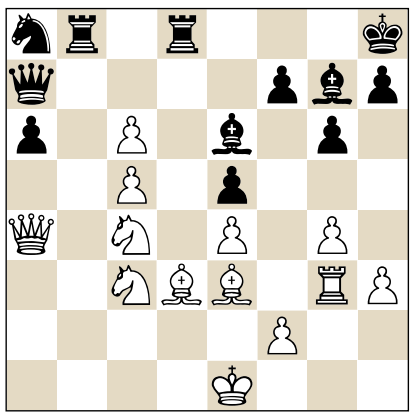
Of course, not 26...♘c7 27.♘b6!. It was such a 'picture' that induced me to double my c-pawns.

27.♗d3

A good move – and the prelude to a mistake!

I was too gripped by the fervour of the battle, and bewitched by my opponent's time-trouble and the proximity of victory, to coolly secure a significant positional advantage with 27.♘b6 ♘xb6 28.cxb6 ♖xb6 29.♗c4! intending 29...♗xc4? 30.♕xc4 ♖c8 31.♕c5!, winning.

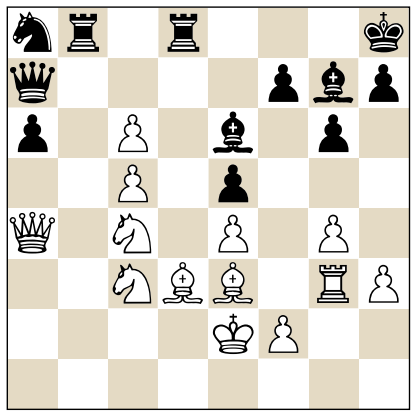
27...♖fd8



28.♔e2?

A blunder, which, together with ♘c5-d7 and ♕d1-f3, significantly reduces the aesthetic value of an otherwise quite good game.

By contrast, 28.♘d6! ♖b3 29.♕a5! would have kept the situation under White's complete control.



28...♘c7?

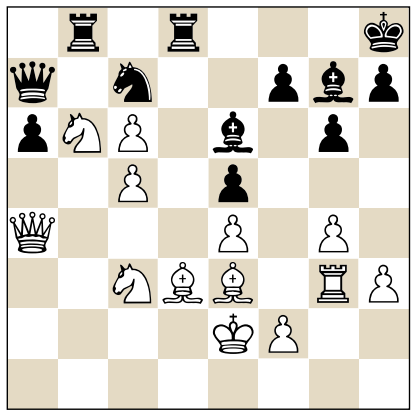
With little more than a minute(!) on his clock, Grischuk immediately answers a mistake with a mistake.

Meanwhile, the natural 28...♖d4! would have turned the situation on its head, when White would have had to seek salvation in the muddy water of time-trouble: 29.♗xd4 exd4 30.♘d5 ♕xc5 31.♕a5 ♕xc6 (the possibility of this move simply escaped my attention!) 32.♔f1 with chances of a draw. As they say, 'one step from the sublime to the ridiculous'!

Just how bad my previous move was is demonstrated by the fact that, along with the strongest move ...♖d4!, Black also had another quite good option: 28...♕e7!?, with counterplay.

29.♘b6

Of course!



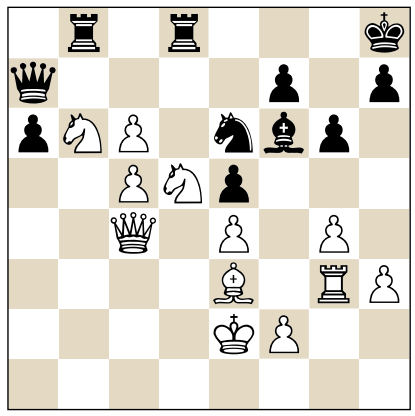
29...♗f6?!

The last serious inaccuracy, but it is already hard to offer Black any good advice. Although Kryakvin's recommendation 29...♗f8 30.♕a5! f6 31.♖f3 ♗e7 32.♗c4 ♗xc4+ 33.♘xc4 ♖b3 looks a more resilient defence, objectively it does not save Black: 34.g5! etc.

As for the patient 29...♔g8!?, firstly, in severe time-trouble it simply may not come to mind, and secondly, it allows White a whole range of attractive possibilities, leading to a clear advantage, of which I will mention the activation of the rook via an unexpected (for this game) route: 30.♖g1! intending ♖a1 or ♖b1.

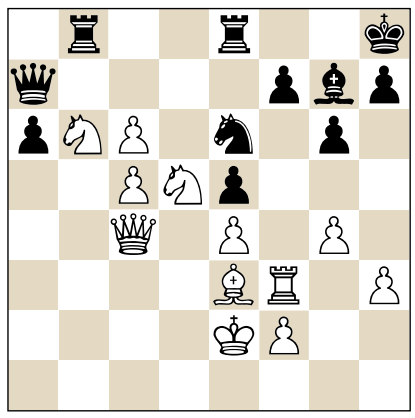
30.♗c4! Consistently continuing the occupation of the centre.

30...♗xc4+ 31.♕xc4 ♘e6 32.♘cd5



Finally the desired set-up is achieved! Black is paralysed.

32...♗g7 33.♖f3 ♖e8 When Alexander picked up his rook, I already wrote down 33...♖f8 on my score sheet and initially I did not believe my eyes on seeing another move. Of course, this time-trouble distortion does not change anything, but merely hastens the end. There followed:

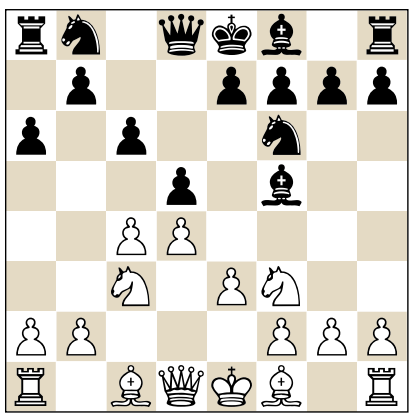


34.c7 ♖b7 35.c8♕ ♖xc8 36.♘xc8 ♖b2+ 37.♔f1

And Black resigned.

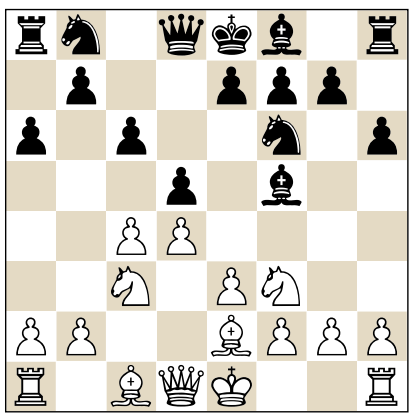
SL 3.1 – D15
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Evgeny Tomashevsky
Tbilisi 2015 (4)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.e3 ♗f5



A 'fire-proof' variation, one of the main drawbacks of which is that it allows White a wide choice of ways to develop his game: from immediate concrete attempts to breach the opponent's position to strictly positional manoeuvring.

6.♗e2!? h6 In the event of 6...e6 7.♘h4 White can hope to obtain a comfortable version of the 4.e3 ♗f5 variation.



7.♗d3

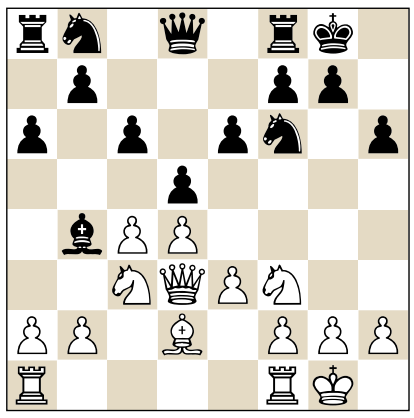
Cf. the note to Black's 5th move – White's choice is so wide, that even such a loss of a 'half tempo' not only has the right to exist, but was even recently employed by the World Champion! The game Carlsen-Nakamura, Shamkir 2014, was played before the eyes of Mamedyarov and it apparently provided him with a powerful stimulus to repeat the line.

This move order enables White to avoid the bishop retreat to g6, which is possible in reply to the direct 6.♗d3, and in some cases the knight on e5 may also feel secure, having the g6-square in reply to ...f7-f6.

But at the same time it seems to me that in this way White cannot really hope for an opening advantage, and in such a manoeuvring battle it is not easy to win a text-book game against a strong player, if you are not Magnus…

7...♗xd3 8.♕xd3 e6 9.0-0 ♗b4 10.♗d2 0-0

I reached the same position, but with the pawn on h7, in a game against Gabriel Sargissian (Warsaw 2013). At that time I suffered a painful defeat at the hands of the splendidly performing and long-standing 'point-scorer' of the Armenian team, but now I had ideas about how to improve Black's play. But Shakhriyar played to forestall me.



11.b3 A perfectly possible continuation. Nothing real is promised by 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.cxd5 ♗xd2, while Carlsen and (in a similar position) Sargissian preferred 11.♖fd1.

11...a5

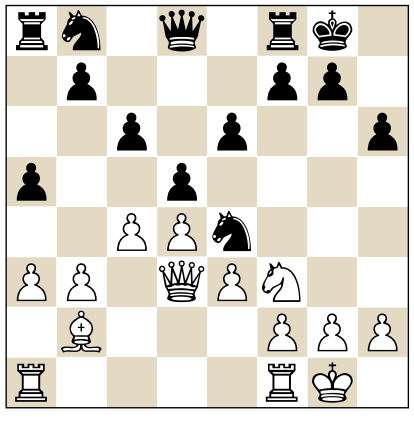
I like this position (and the game as a whole) largely for the reason that it lends itself poorly to computer analysis. The landmarks for the two sides are eroded, and the success of actions in a situation, which for dozens of moves is in the 'silicon' range of 0.2 pawns, is determined by strategic mastery and skill in positional play, and also by reserves of patience and self-confidence. It is interesting to follow the clash of human and computer evaluations throughout the game, bearing in mind that the perception of events by Shakhriyar and myself largely differed radically from that given by the computer.

Here I faced the first evaluation problem: should I advance the pawn to a5 in the light of the probable exchange of the dark-squared bishop? I decided (not least under the influence of my game with Sargissian) that in the given case it was more important to expand my 'living space'. It was also one of the most convenient defences against catastrophes such as 11...♘bd7?? 12.♘xd5.

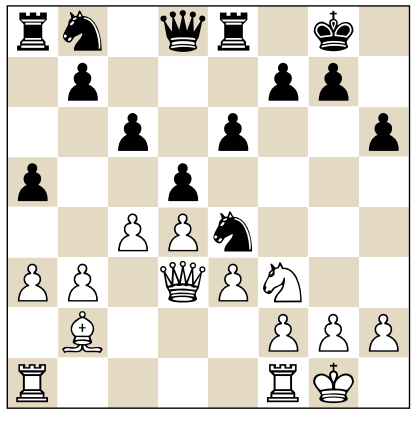
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov has a chat with compatriot and chief arbiter Faik Gasanov. Scoring a lacklustre 50 per cent, the Azeri number one failed to impress.

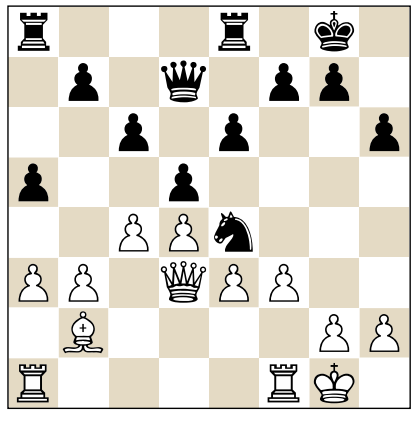
12.a3 ♗xc3
The retreat of the bishop is possible, but rather illogical.
13.♗xc3 ♘e4 14.♗b2
Other things being equal, here White can hope to play for a win only by keeping the exchangeable pieces on the board, and therefore 14.♘d2 ♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♘d7 is harmless.



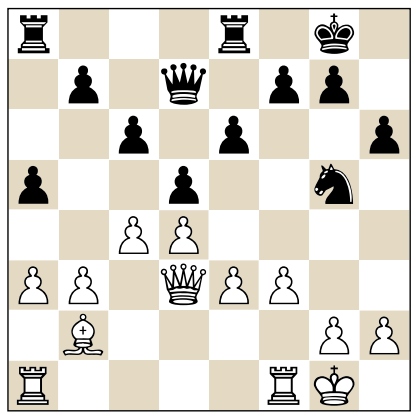
14...♖e8!?
The problem facing Black is one of those which occurs far more often in a practical game than in books, because of the lack of a clear-cut instructive solution.
It was possible to change radically the pattern of play: 14...a4!? 15.b4 ♘d6 16.c5 ♘c4, but I was afraid that after 17.♗c3 White would seize too much space and would be able to expand in the centre and on the kingside – a questionable opinion.
After the 'automatic' 14...♘d7 I was concerned about the no less typical 15.a4!, after which White's bishop obtains quite good prospects, and in general it is simpler for him to devise a program of action for the next few moves. Therefore I chose a more flexible continuation.



15.♘e5!?
Mamedyarov immediately takes a responsible strategic decision. A less enterprising player would probably not have 'got involved' and would have nevertheless chosen 15.a4, inviting me to decide whether to make use of the additional possibility 15...♘a6!?. This is what I was intending to reply, but I did not have full confidence in the prospects of the knight on b4.
15...♘d7 Of course, the knights must be exchanged. Generally speaking, structurally this exchange is clearly in Black's favour: it is easier to find a good place for one knight, and the white knight was excellently expanding the possibilities of the rest of its army. At the same time, Carlsen (against Kamsky, St. Louis 2013) and Sargissian have shown that even after the exchange things are not so simple.
16.♘xd7 ♕xd7 17.f3



17...♘g5!
I liked this reply during the game, and I also rate it highly now. In my view, this is a classic instance when one should not pay much attention to the computer's 'opinion'. In its opinion, here all the retreats are roughly equivalent, but the human view is that this is not altogether so:
– After 17...♘f6 18.e4 dxe4 19.fxe4 e5 20.d5 White's positional achievements are evident, in contrast to the prospects of the knight on f6.
– And if 17...♘d6 there is the strong reply 18.c5 ♘c8 19.a4! ♘e7 20.e4 – here, apart from the lack of space, the weakness of the a5-pawn is felt.



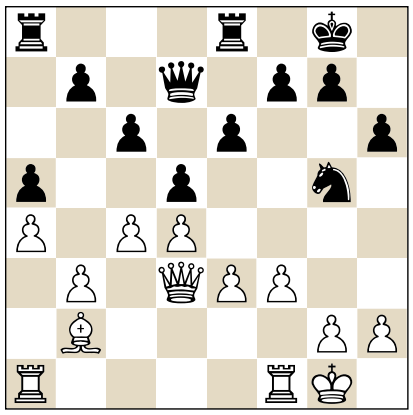
18.a4
Possibly White should nevertheless have decided on the immedi-

Grand Prix

Standings after 3 rounds			1	2	3	4	Total
1	Evgeny Tomashevsky	2716	82		170	...	252
2	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	2759	35	125	75	x	235
3	Fabiano Caruana	2811	155	75		...	230
4	Teimour Radjabov	2731	50	50	110	x	210
5	Hikaru Nakamura	2776	82	125		...	207
6	Dmitry Andreikin	2737	20	170	10	x	200
7	Dmitry Jakovenko	2733		30	140	...	170
8	Boris Gelfand	2747	155	15		...	170
9	Sergey Karjakin	2760	82	75		...	157
10	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	2706	35	15	75	x	125
11	Alexander Grischuk	2810	82		40	...	122
12	Baadur Jobava	2696		75	40	...	115
12	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2775		75	40	...	115
14	Anish Giri	2797		40	75	...	115
15	Peter Svidler	2739	82		20	...	102
16	Leinier Dominguez	2726	10		75	...	85

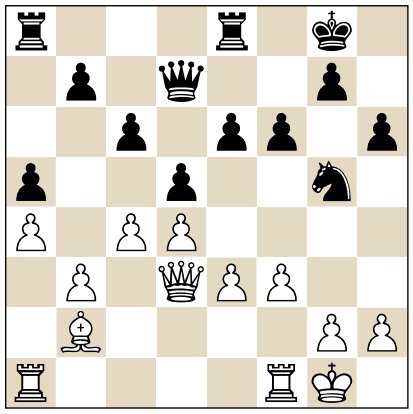
1=Baku, 2=Tashkent, 3=Tbilisi, 4=Khanty-Mansiysk (May 2015)

ate 18.e4!?, although I can understand Shakhriyar, who did not want, apart from the modest 18...f6!?, to have to reckon with 18...a4!?, as well as ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5 in various combinations.



18...f6

The knight is now aiming for an excellent post at f7, from which, as will subsequently be seen, it can also switch successfully to the queenside, and White's aggression in the centre will be met by a very sound defensive wall. At the same time, in the event of the opening of the game the bishop is restricted beforehand. Nevertheless, for the moment Black's achievements should not be overrated – accuracy is still required of him.

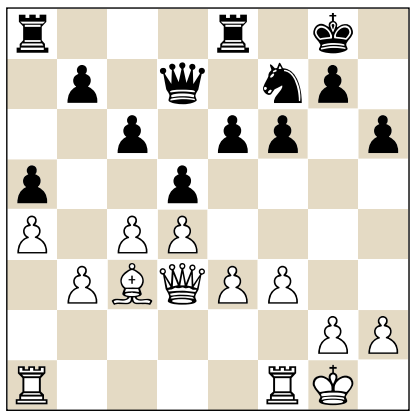


19.♗c3 Not a bad move, but 19.e4 was perhaps more concrete – in reply to this White should hardly be concerned about 19...dxe4 20.fxe4 e5 21.d5 c5, when although after the switching of the knight to d6 Black's position is very hard to breach, even so the play is 'for one and a half results'. Possibly I would have preferred something more flexible, such as 19...♖ad8 or 19...♘f7.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

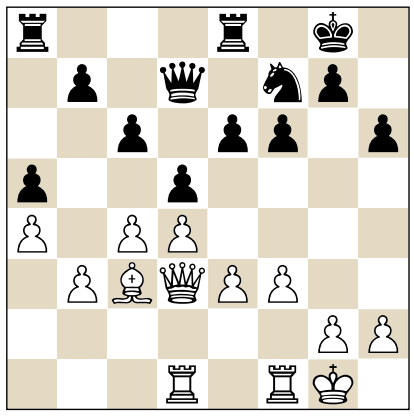
Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, hosted the third leg of the 2014-15 FIDE Grand Prix cycle.

19...♘f7



20.♖ad1

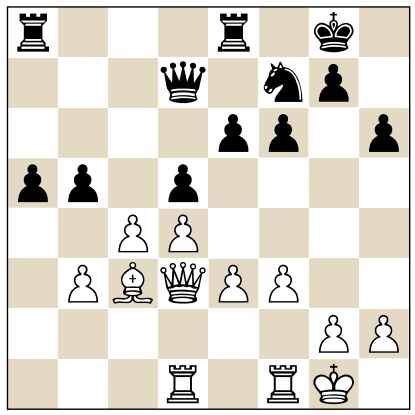
It was better to centralize, without allowing Black's next move, by means of 20.♖fd1 or nevertheless play 20.e4 – in both cases with viscous play, where White's position is freer and therefore slightly more pleasant.



20...b5!

'Plugging' the light squares and, from the human point of view, solving all Black's problems. This was also the view of Mamedyarov, who lamented after the game that he had overlooked this resource. But curiously, the machine is again of a different opinion…

21.axb5 cxb5



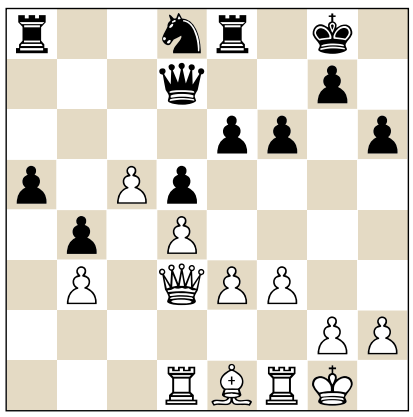
22.c5

The most natural reply, which was quite quickly made by my opponent. 22.cxb5 ♖eb8 23.♖a1 ♕xb5 24.♕xb5 ♖xb5 could lead to an inferior ending for White, and therefore, to avoid creating the blockading square c6 for the black knight, I would have preferred 22.cxd5! ♕xd5 23.♖a1 a4, when with accurate play things head towards a quick draw.

22...b4 23.♗e1 ♘d8

Finally the knight has acquired excellent prospects. Paradoxically, at this

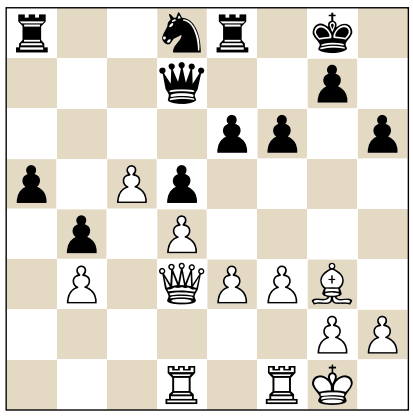
point the machine begins giving White virtually the maximum evaluation over the entire game! Let us try to figure out who is right.



24.♗g3

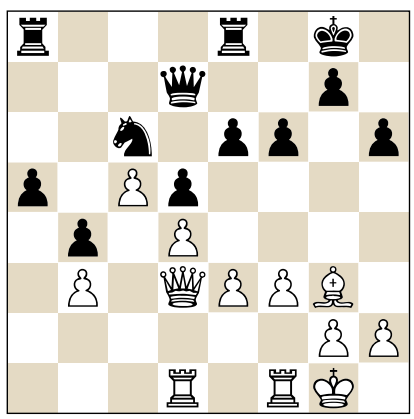
24.♖f2! was stronger, switching this hitherto inactive rook to the a-file: 24...♘c6 25.♖a2 ♖ed8 26.♗g3, and Black should not play 26...e5 27.dxe5 fxe5?! , because of 28.♗h4!. It is better simply to mark time and invite White to demonstrate an active plan, which for him is not apparent, despite the rather bleak numbers on the screen. After 26.♗g3 I don't know how appropriate the categorical evaluation 'positional draw' is, but in my opinion it is very close to this.

The computer is definitely correct in one respect: because of the effect of the 'blockading' knight, from here and almost to the end of the game Shakhriyar and I sharply overrated Black's position.



24...♘c6

I was so glad to triumphantly complete the route of this wanderer, which for a long time has been seeking its post, that I was too lazy to calculate properly 24...a4!? 25.bxa4 ♕xa4 26.♖a1? (correct is the quiet 26.♖b1) 26...♕xa1 27.♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 28.♔f2 with the verdict 'but suppose that White can save himself here?'. A strange shifting of evaluations – cf. the previous note. It is precisely here that things are indeed bad for White, and Black only needs to discover the splendid resource 28...♖e7! 29.♕b5 b3!.



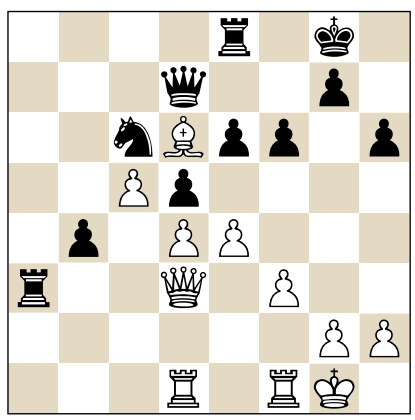
25.♗d6?!

But it turned out even better! White's first serious inaccuracy transforms him into the defending side for the entire remaining part of the game. This could have been avoided in two ways. First, the natural 25.♖a1 allows Black to play 25...e5 26.dxe5 fxe5, with chances for both sides, but after such a change in the central configuration one can hardly speak of any serious problems for White.

Secondly, after 25.♕c2!? he is not afraid of the non-obligatory pawn sacrifice 25...a4 26.bxa4 ♖a6 because of 27.♖a1 ♖ea8 28.♖a2! ♘a5 29.♕b1! b3 30.♖b2 ♕xa4 31.♖c1 and ♗e1.

25...a4 The breakthrough has taken place in ideal circumstances.

26.bxa4 ♖xa4 27.e4 ♖a3



White now has a very unpleasant position, demanding painstak-

MARIA EMELIANOVA

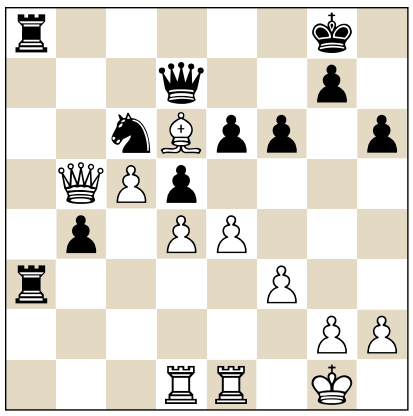
Evgeny Tomashevsky controls the ball during the football match on the free day. If you're wondering if he is any good, we can assure you that the young Russian is a very decent player.

ing defence. But Shakhriyar did not reduce the speed and confidence with which he made his moves, which hardly helped him…

28.♕b5

Possibly 28.♕e2!? was slightly more subtle, for the moment not restricting the queen's movements and avoiding an option indicated in the note to Black's 29th move.

28...♖ea8 29.♖fe1



29...♖8a7

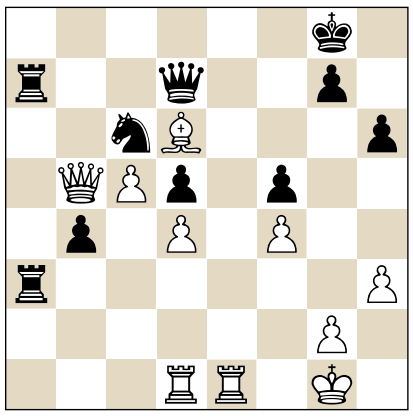
To be honest, here I thought that my position was already almost a technical win(!) and I began looking for the most accurate way of strengthening it, to avoid any counterplay for the opponent.

In fact here there was an appropriate possibility of increasing the advantage, speculating on the favourable transition into an endgame and activating the queen: 29...♕c8!. In this case White's problems would have become almost critical.

30.f4! f5

Of course, f4-f5 should not be allowed.

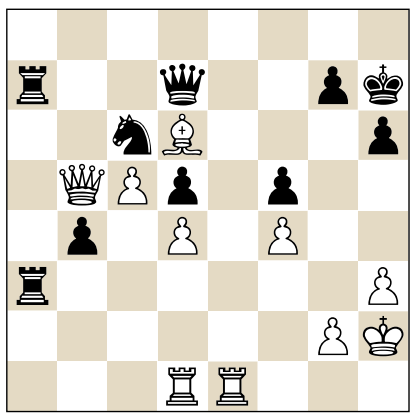
31.exf5 exf5 32.h3



White has exploited the opponent's delay and, while apparently worsening his pawn structure and shortening his bishop's diagonal, he has in fact lengthened it thanks to the important e5-square.

32...♔h7 33.♔h2

After the planned improvement of the position Black now faced the problem of a 'decisive' strengthening, and here I began to suspect that things were not so simple.



33...♖b7

Not a bad choice, which is hard to condemn. It is clear that from the practical point of view Black's advantage is significant, but to find in analysis ways of increasing it, to say nothing of its conversion, is not at all easy. Perhaps Black's main trump in such a situation is the difficulty for a human opponent of a dismal and passive defence. It is very difficult to maintain one's composure under such oppression, which can lead to further mistakes! Whereas the computer quite calmly defends even in the event of the more aggressive 33...♖c3 34.♖c1! ♖b7 35.♕f1 ♖xc1 36.♖xc1 b3 37.♖b1 or 33...♖a2 34.♖e2 ♖7a5 35.♕d3 ♖2a3 36.♕b1!? ♖c3 37.♖d3.

34.♕e2 ♕f7

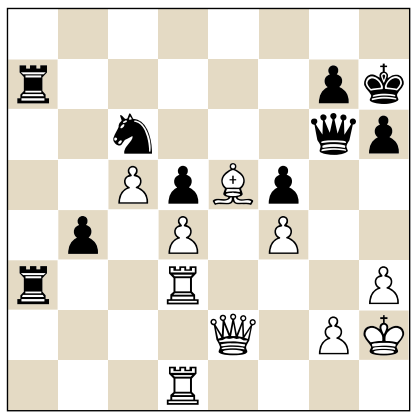
On the threshold of time-trouble I rightly did not want to rush with 34...b3 35.♕f3.

35.♖d3 ♕g6 36.♖ed1

36.♖b1!? ♖ba7 37.♗e5 was safer.

36...♖ba7 37.♗e5

An imperceptible inaccuracy, which allows Black to 'test' his opponent, whereas after 37.♕f3! it would have been difficult for me to devise any even slightly sensible ideas for strengthening my position.

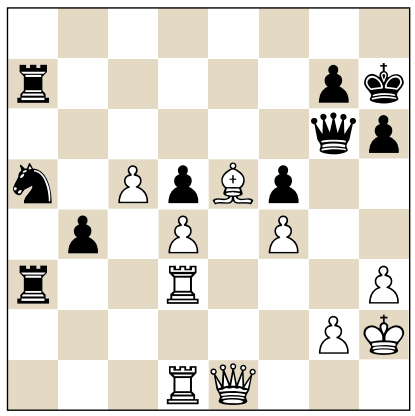


37...♘a5!

The best chance. I was pleased to make use of this possibility of activating my position, having convinced myself that in the preceding play I had delayed somewhere (on the whole, correct) and that now I was reverting to the correct conversion path (an extremely optimistic evaluation).

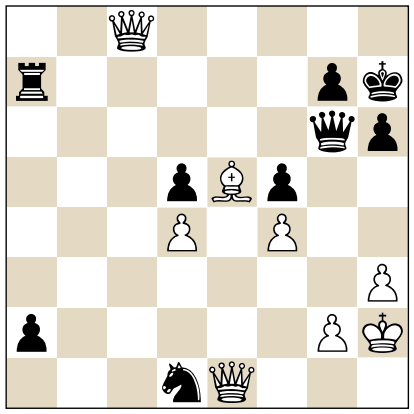
38.♕e1?

White was already close to the 'fatal line', and accuracy was required. He would have been saved by 38.♖xa3! bxa3 39.♕f3 ♘c4 40.♖a1 – a similar situation could have arisen after the time scramble.



38...♕a6?

A natural continuation of the flank expansion (the inclusion of the queen!), but in fact Black misses a spectacular win: 38...♘c4!. I avoided this logical jump because of 39.c6, not noticing 39...♘b2! 40.♖xa3 bxa3 41.c7 ♘xd1 42.c8♕ a2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and the two queens do not save White! The best that he can do is transpose into what is indeed now a technical position the exchange down by 43.♕xd1 a1♕ 44.♕xa1 ♖xa1.

39.♖xa3

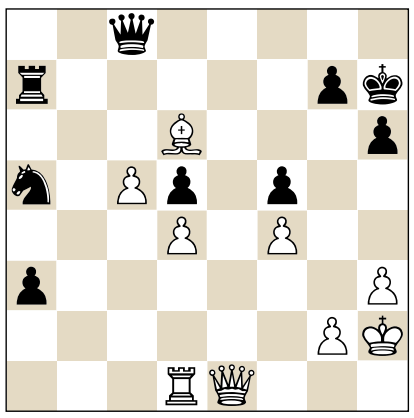
39.♕g3!? was also not bad, but it would appear that Shakhriyar's choice was objectively also good enough to save the game.

39...bxa3 40.♗d6!

White activates his position! I had envisaged this counter-attacking attempt and had prepared in advance ...

40...♕c8!

... after which, having made the time-control, I was very pleased with myself: I thought that the passed pawn, which had moved on to a3, together with the other positional pluses would enable me soon to break the last line of White's defence. Fortunately, that is also what Mamedyarov thought, and he quickly chose ...



41.♖b1??

It is amazing how solid White's position is! Even here he could have coolly defended, and in more than one way.

The strongest was 41.♕g3! ♘c4 42.♖a1!, when, since 42...a2 43.♕f2! is not possible, Black has to switch to manoeuvring in the hope of a mistake by the opponent, or seek some cunning plan for strengthening his position.

But 41.♕c3!? was also possible, and even after 41.♗e5!? a2 42.♖a1 ♘c6 43.♕c3 ♕a6 44.♕c2 it is very difficult for Black to demonstrate any winning pretensions. Besides, I have by no means listed all the defensive resources for White, who has merely not to leave the a-pawn unattended in order to gain excellent drawing chances! The impulsive move in the game does nothing to solve this problem…

41...a2 42.♖b8 ♕d7 43.♕a1

And White resigned, without waiting for the obvious 43...♕a4 44.♕e1 a1♕ 45.♕e6 ♕d7 (or 45...♕4xd4 46.♕g8+ ♔g6 47.♕e6+ ♕f6).

> 'Can you imagine a more gripping disposition before the start of a category 21 all-play-all tournament?'

Of course, such a 'double' against two of the favourites, who in addition are difficult opponents for me, could not fail to give me confidence and a positive attitude, and later I was able both to successfully survive a difficult patch in the middle of the tournament and to perform a decisive spurt at the finish.

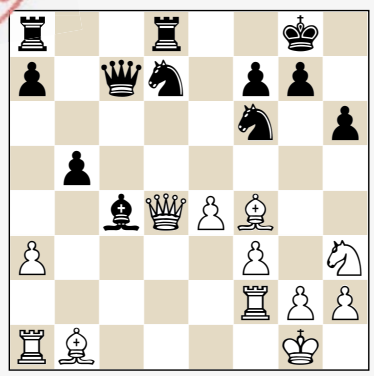
I am frequently asked what is now the alignment of force in the Grand Prix series, how will the battle develop in the concluding stage, and so on. I have already said at the start of my account that I do not want to rush with any conclusions and forecasts. It is better if I point out this: out of the 12 contestants in the tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk, three have serious chances of qualifying for the Candidates' tournament; a further three have by no means lost their chances; the remaining six, although they can achieve complete success in the series only given a very fortunate set of circumstances, to some degree are the favourites in tournaments of any standard, they are also outstanding competitors and are certainly full of resolve to change the current alignment of force, by demonstrating their pretentions. Can you imagine a more gripping disposition before the start of a category 21 all-play-all tournament? ■

Tbilisi 2015

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		TPR
1	Evgeny Tomashevsky	IGM	RUS	2716	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	8	2921
2	Dmitry Jakovenko	IGM	RUS	2733	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	6½	2810
3	Teimour Radjabov	IGM	AZE	2731	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	6	2781
4	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2726	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	5½	2745
6	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	IGM	UZB	2705	0	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	5½	2747
5	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2797	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	5½	2739
7	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2759	0	½	½	½	0	½	*	1	1	0	½	1	5½	2742
8	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2775	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	*	½	1	½	½	5	2705
9	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2810	0	½	0	½	1	½	0	½	*	1	½	½	5	2702
10	Baadur Jobava	IGM	GEO	2696	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	0	0	*	1	½	5	2712
11	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2739	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	*	1	4½	2679
12	Dmitry Andreikin	IGM	RUS	2737	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	*	4	2642

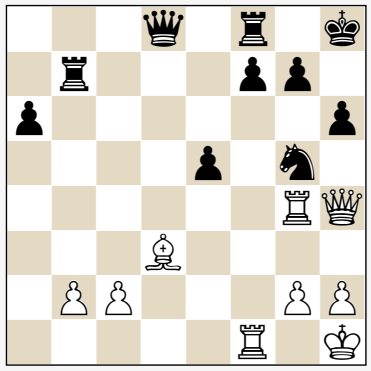
Solutions

from page 67



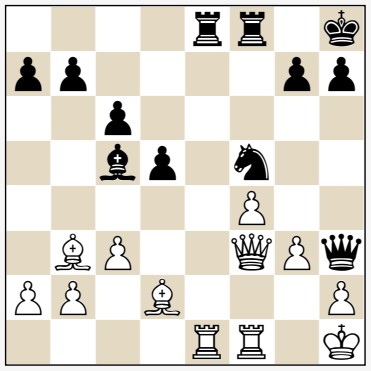
1. Savchenko-Predke
Aeroflot Open 2015

20...♘e5! White resigned. He should give up the queen or else the black rook penetrates to the back rank, mating.



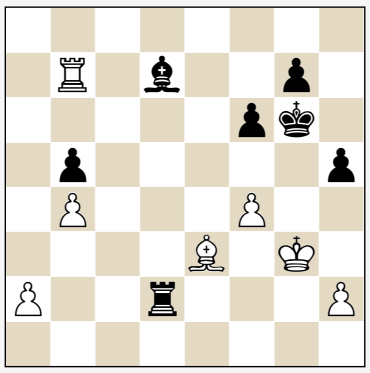
2. Danin-Simantsev
Prague 2015

31.♖xg5! Black resigned, as after 31... ♕xg5 32. ♕e4 he loses a rook due to a double attack on h7 and b7.



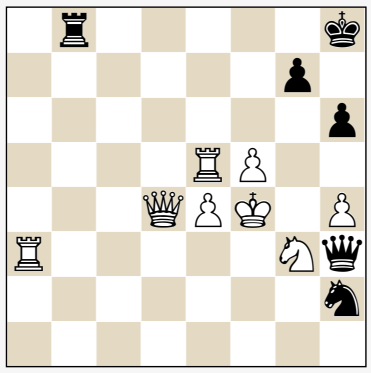
3. Draskovic-Romanishin
Porto San Giorgio 2013

22...♖e2! Luring and distracting at the same time. White resigned in view of 23.♖xe2 ♘xg3+ 24.♕xg3 ♕xf1+.



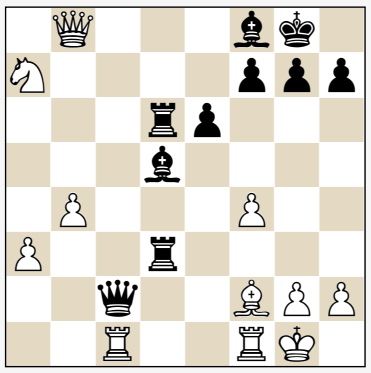
4. Lintchevski-Hammer
Stockholm 2014

Black wove a mating net with **42...h4+! 43.♔xh4** 43.♔f3 ♗c6+ 44.♔g4 ♖g2+. **43...♖d3** White resigned. After ...♗e6 he can't save the bishop. 44.f5+ doesn't solve the problem because of 44...♔xf5!.



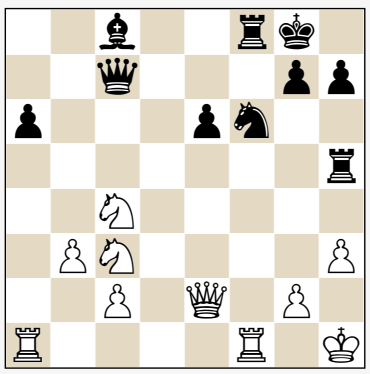
5. Murdzia-Feygin
Viernheim 2014

After 50.♕g1? ♕g4+ 51.♔e3 ♕f3+ White lost his extra rook and the game. He could give it back voluntarily: **50.♖e8+!! ♖xe8 51.♕xg7+! ♔xg7 52.♘h5+ ♔f7 53.♖xh3** Liquidating into a winning endgame.



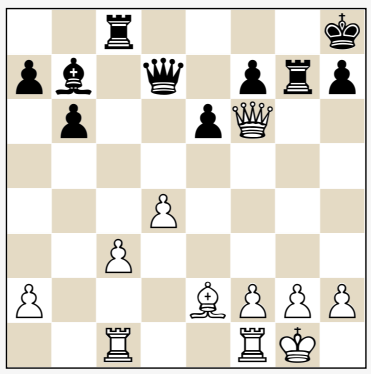
6. Palliser-Shaw
Hinckley Island 2015

The queen can't retreat right away due to 25.♖c8. **24...♖g3! 25.hxg3 ♕e4** White resigned.



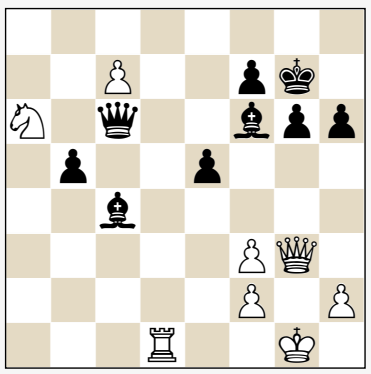
7. Khabarov-Ageichenko
Moscow 2012

30...♖xh3+! 31.gxh3 ♗b7+ 32.♖f3 32.♔g1 ♕g3+. **32...♘g4! 33.♕xe6+?** 33.♔g1 ♖xf3 34.♕xe6+ ♔f8 35.♕d6+ was more tenacious. **33...♔h8 34.♕d6 ♖xf3! 35.♔g1** 35.♕xc7 ♖f1#; 35.hxg4 ♖f6+. **35...♖g3+ 36.♔f1 ♕f7+** 0-1.



8. Szelag-B.Socko
Rostock 2015

20...♗xg2 21.♖fd1 is merely good for Black. **20...♕e7!! 21.♕xe7** 21.♕e5 f6. **21...♖xg2+ 22.♔h1** As the bishop on b7 is hanging, the rook should go forward: **22...♖g1+! 23.♔xg1 ♖g8+ 24.♗g4 ♖xg4** Mate.



9. Volkov-Grandelius
Stockholm 2014

It seems White can't derive benefit from his c-pawn. For example, 33.♖d8 runs into 33...♕xa6 34.c8♕ ♕a1+. **33.♖c1! ♕xa6 34.♖xc4!** Not 34.♕h3 ♗e6. **34...bxc4 35.♕h3** And White won.

Sadler on Books

Openings: by the book or buy the DVD?

As part of my continuing quest to provide you with a total multimedia review experience, I've been whizzing through a few ChessBase opening DVD's recently. In particular I was interested to compare books and DVD's as a medium for learning an opening. I read once that the great pianist Vladimir Horowitz was extremely ambivalent about recording for the television. Though it was a fantastic medium for reaching an audience that would normally not be exposed to classical music, he felt a viewer was much more likely to get distracted while watching TV than just listening to a recording. For myself, I do concentrate much more while reading a book than while looking at a screen (actually kind of a worrying admission from an IT guy!). I tend to watch chess opening DVD's while collapsed on the sofa after a hard day's work, glass of wine in my hand and trying to delay the moment when I have to go and cook for myself. I may also be reading the paper at the same time. I guess that I'm about 25% brain active and a vast amount of Elo below my normal strength, so I need an chess opening DVD that can help me learn something even when I'm not at my sharpest. The chess opening DVD's I've enjoyed the most have had the following general characteristics:

■ They deal with a fairly homogenous system in which typical themes recur consistently throughout the DVD.

The more different systems a DVD examines, the more flexibility and attention the viewer requires to assimilate the information and to give it a proper place in his head. This can rapidly become a very tiring experience.

■ They avoid complex positions with many tactical variations.

Such positions are a nightmare to explain on DVD and not much fun to follow either. It takes forever to work through the variations and the viewer ends up losing the thread of the variations very quickly. That's not such a problem if you're watching a games collection DVD in which it's enough to go 'Oooh!' and 'Aaah!' as the variations whizz past you, but it's really annoying when watching something you might want to play yourself later!

■ The material is presented in small bite-size chunks.

> 'I do concentrate much more while reading a book than while looking at a screen (actually kind of a worrying admission from an IT guy!)'

It's nice as a viewer to get a sense of achievement while watching the DVD. If you have got through 4 or 5 short clips, that feels much better than having survived a single monster clip of 30 minutes.

I was pleasantly surprised how much I seemed to pick up when the material was presented in a good way. In particular, I've found that opening move orders stick much better than when I read a book. I guess that this aspect fits the DVD medium quite nicely. Move orders are often a matter of experience, and a lot of my knowledge about move orders has come from talking to experts in the opening. A DVD by the expert is the next best thing!

Strategically complex positions also come across well in the DVD format. As I found out for myself when doing an online video series for *Chess24*, it does take a lot of time to explain a single position in any depth, but I found that I absorbed typical plans more easily via the DVD format than by looking at them in a book.

The player's personality adds a lot of colour of course to the whole experience. The DVD is kind of a live experience. Unless something goes dreadfully wrong, a player is going to speak for 15 minutes without stopping. During that time there will be a couple of moments when an unnoticed tactical point looms up and you suddenly see him wonder whether the variation he's recommending doesn't work at all!

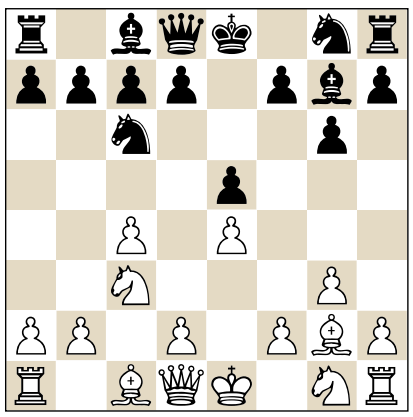
■ ■ ■

ABC of the English Opening
A Complete Repertoire for White
by Lorin D'Costa
ChessBase 2014

★★★

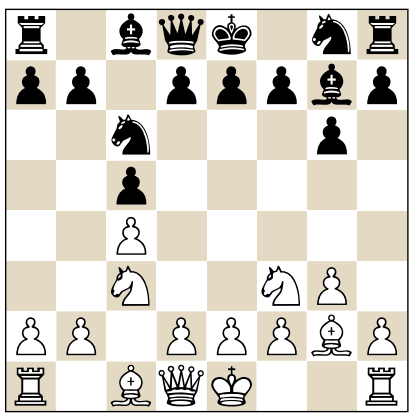
ABC of the English Opening by Lorin D'Costa (ChessBase DVD) is a simple high-level overview of the English Opening, presenting a repertory based on using 2.g3 as the second move against pretty much everything. The Botvinnik System is the cornerstone of the repertory against 1.c4 e5:

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4



Against 1...c5, D'Costa recommends the main line of the g3 systems:

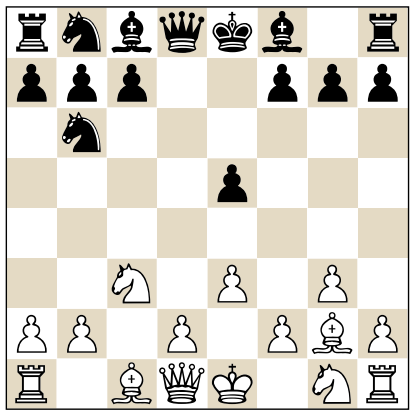
1.c4 c5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.♘c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3



D'Costa comes across very well in the DVD format, speaking very clearly and calmly all the way through and pitching the material at a very good level for his target audience. He's definitely someone I can cope with after a long hard day's work! The only thing I noticed from the presentation point of view was D'Costa's trademark phrase 'White/Black can *hardly* exchange his bishop / sacrifice a pawn / afford to lose a tempo'. After listening to about 4 or 5 hours of him, I was cheering every time the phrase came around again! A little juvenile of course, but all those little things make it a living experience and funnily enough, it also helps you to remember the material much better!

From the content point of view, I had a couple of doubts about the repertoire he suggests. I think that's partly due to the title of the DVD. From an ABC series, I'd expected fairly solid, stodgy English variations, so I was a bit shocked to come across a couple of 'walk-on-the-wild-side' repertory suggestions! First of all, this line against the Reversed Sicilian lines:

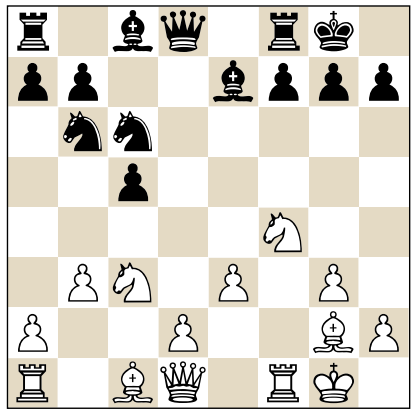
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘c3 ♘b6 6.e3



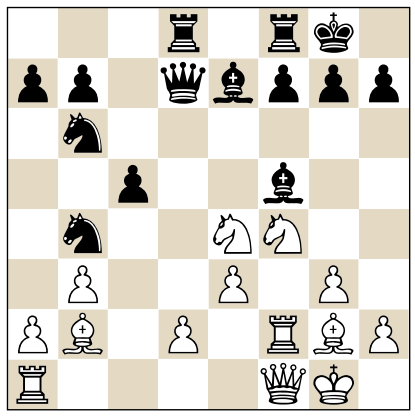
The inspiration for this is the gorgeous game Nakamura-Navara, Wijk aan Zee 2012. Well worth quoting again!

EO 3.11 – A22
Hikaru Nakamura
David Navara
Wijk aan Zee 2012

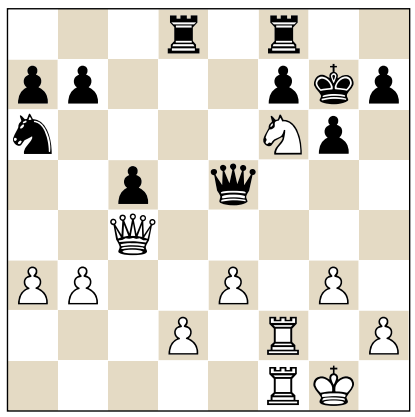
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘b6 6.e3 c5 7.♘ge2 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.f4 exf4 10.♘xf4 0-0 11.b3



11...♗f5 12.♗b2 ♕d7 13.♘e4 ♖ad8 14.♖f2 ♘b4 15.♕f1



15...♗xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘6d5 17.♘h5 g6 18.a3 ♘a6 19.♗xd5 ♕xd5 20.♗f6 ♕d6 21.♗xe7 ♕xe7 22.♘f6+ ♔g7 23.♕c4 ♕e5 24.♖af1



24...h5 25.♘xh5+ ♕xh5 26.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 27.♖xf7+ ♔h6 28.♕f4+

New In Chess Stars	
★★★★★	Instant classic
★★★★	Excellent
★★★	Good
★★	Mediocre
★	Awful

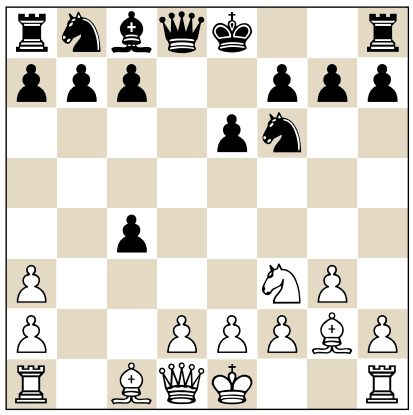
Sadler on Books

g5 29.♕f6+ ♕g6 30.♕f1 ♕h5 31.♖xb7 c4 32.♕f6+ ♕g6 33.♕xd8 ♕b1+ 34.♔f2 1-0

I can understand you might want to follow this game! However, these are pretty weird, non-standard positions to play for White so I'm not sure they'd be every English player's cup of tea.

This is even more the case with this variation against Black's Catalan-style move orders:

1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.♘f3 dxc4 5.♘a3 ♗xa3 6.bxa3



I got cold shivers down my spine when I saw this recommendation come along! That is a big positional concession to make right from the opening in my view. Black doesn't even need to try and keep the pawn on c4: he can simply push the e-pawn to e5 and develop normally and simply leave White with a very ropey queenside structure. A matter of taste in the end of course, but it definitely gets a health warning from me!

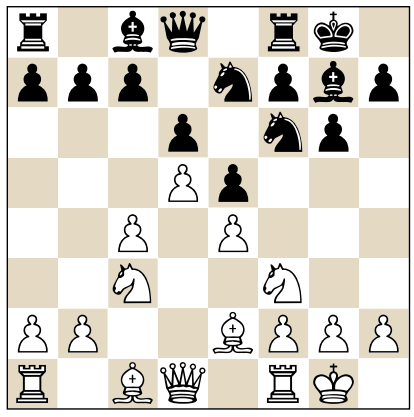
But in general, the DVD was good fun to watch and definitely a good introduction to the English Opening for club players!

■ ■ ■

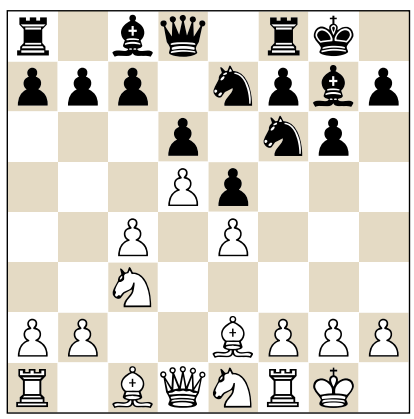
'Mercy! Lord have mercy on me!' was my first thought as two volumes of Vassilios Kotronias' King's Indian series exploded through my letterbox. I felt hunted with nowhere to hide. Variations! Everywhere variations!

I have to admit that I had to overcome a considerable mental barrier in order to get started on Kotronias' two-volume epic treatment of the King's Indian Mar Del Plata Variation.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7



Part of it is purely personal: I've never felt remotely tempted to touch this variation as White. If I'm to allow Black to throw his kingside pawns at my king with complete freedom, then I want something more in return than the prospect of winning the a7-pawn. However, both volumes also seemed to be completely bereft of explanation about the ideas behind the moves. The normal way I try to assimilate a new opening is to build up a kind of framework of typical themes, and then try and hang specific variations onto that framework. How do you do that if the typical themes aren't explained? Fantastic analysis of course, but so many lines are given up to and past move 40! Who can possibly remember all that? Muttering to myself grumpily I started reading through the first volume and in particular the chapters on the old main line **9.♘e1**



But do you know: it's really not as

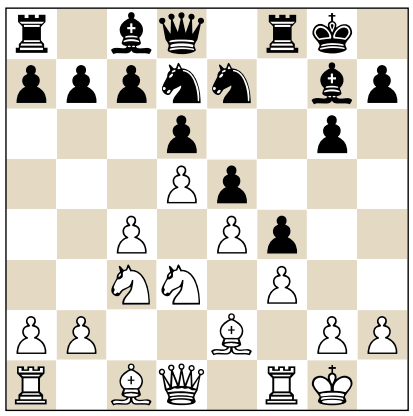
Kotronias on the King's Indian, Volumes Two and Three
Mar del Plata I and II
by Vassilios Kotronias
Quality Chess 2015

★★★★

impenetrable as I'd thought! After a few train journeys' worth of reading, I started to get a weird feeling that the contours of the opening were becoming clearer to me. I came slowly to the conclusion that Kotronias has actually done a superb job of organizing the material, and that Quality Chess has also done an excellent job of presenting the material. In particular, I felt that the main variations in each chapter very strongly reflected typical logical play for both sides in this variation, and that the large number of diagrams made it easy to follow things without needing a board. This made it so much easier to give each variation a place in my head and to extract the typical themes from each line.

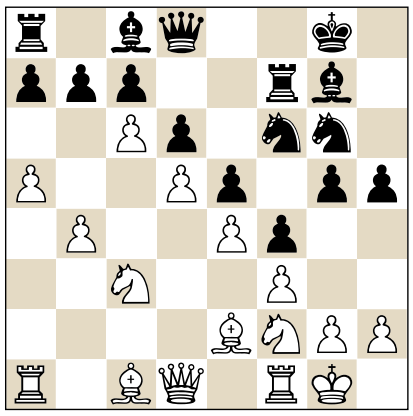
I can best illustrate this with some examples.

Chapter 3 begins with the variation **9...♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.f3 f4**



As Kotronias explains, both 11.♗d2 ♘f6 12.f3 f4 and 11.f3 f4 are common move orders and usually transpose into each other. After 11.f3 f4, White does get the possibility to find another spot for the bishop on c1 (e.g. a3).

Quality Chess always begin each chapter with a short variation index and a number of diagrams (usually 3) with critical positions from the chapter. There I spotted the following position which arises after **12.b4 ♘f6 13.c5 g5 14.a4 h5 15.♘f2 ♘g6 16.a5 ♖f7 17.c6**



Funny, never occurred to me before, but I suddenly realised that White is simply setting up a typical Sämisch structure on the kingside with a pawn on f3 and a knight on f2. In

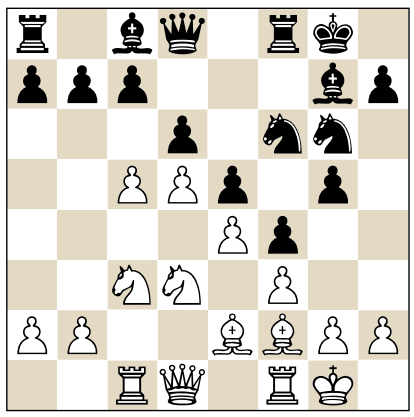
‘I felt hunted with nowhere to hide. Variations! Everywhere variations!’

the Sämisch King’s Indian (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3) White plays his pawn to f3 first and then tries to organize ♘h3-f2 (though it often ends up being ♘e2-g3-h1-f2!). Here, he’s played ♘f3-e1, then f3 and ♘d3-f2 but the result is pretty similar. I also suddenly understood that I was witnessing the typical White way of holding back Black’s kingside advances while trying to break through on the other side. White’s queen on d1, bishop on e2, knight on f2 and pawn on f3 (often with extra help from a pawn on h3) help prevent …g5-g4 and thus ensure that Black has to work to achieve the …g5-g4 break he desires.

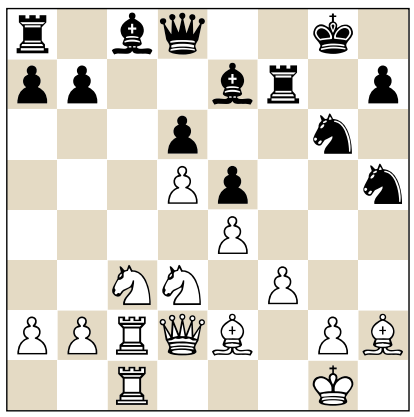
But aren’t there lines where White plays the bishop to e3 and then drops back the bishop to f2? Like in the classic Taimanov-Najdorf game from the 1953 Candidates? That’s a completely different defensive plan on the kingside, isn’t it?

KI 2.1 – E99
Mark Taimanov
Miguel Najdorf
Zurich 1953

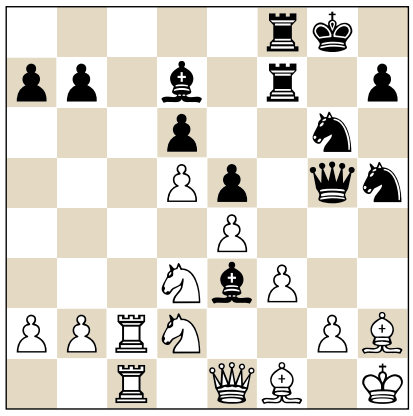
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♘d3 ♘f6 14.c5 ♘g6 15.♖c1



15...♖f7 16.♖c2 ♗f8 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♕d2 g4 19.♖fc1 g3 20.hxg3 fxg3 21.♗xg3 ♘h5 22.♗h2 ♗e7

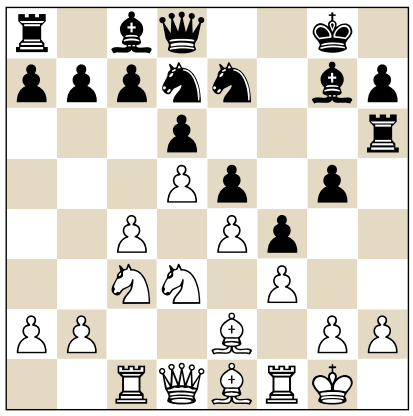


23.♘b1 ♗d7 24.♕e1 ♗g5 25.♘d2 ♗e3+ 26.♔h1 ♕g5 27.♗f1 ♖af8

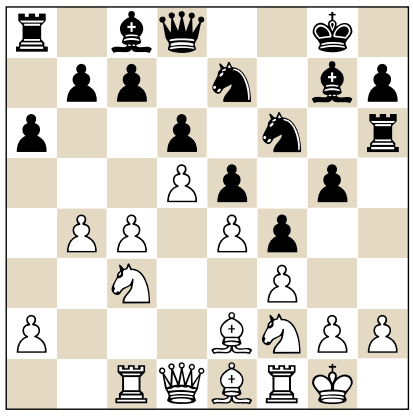


Well… strangely enough White still retains the possibility of bringing a knight to f2 in that line. Kotronias shows one line:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♖c1 ♖f6 14.♘d3 ♖h6 15.♗e1



15...a6 16.b4 ♘f6 17.♘f2

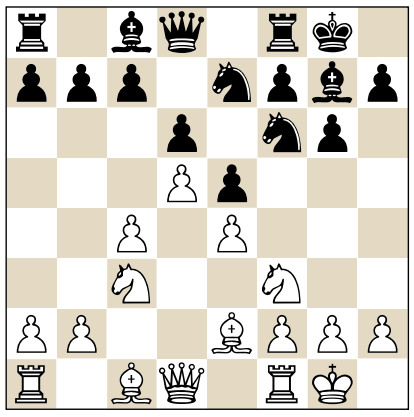


... and we have our defensive structure again! ‘With the bishop on the rubbish e1-square though!’ I hear you cry.

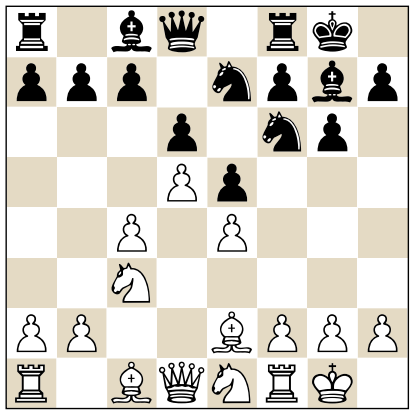
Well… take a look at the lines where White puts his bishop on d2 rather than e3:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7

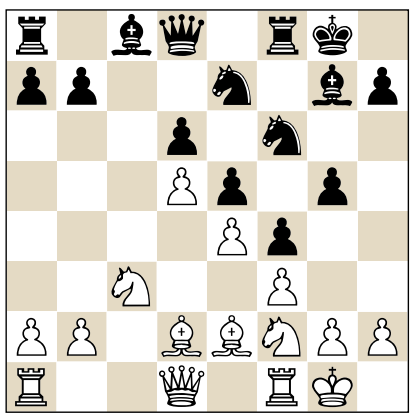
Sadler on Books



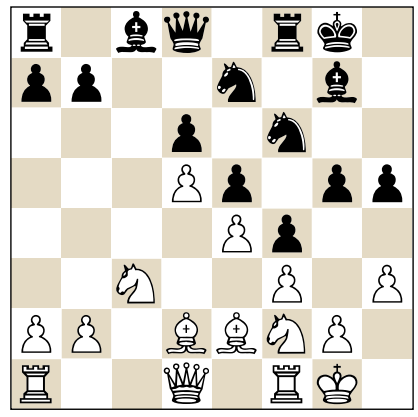
9.♘e1



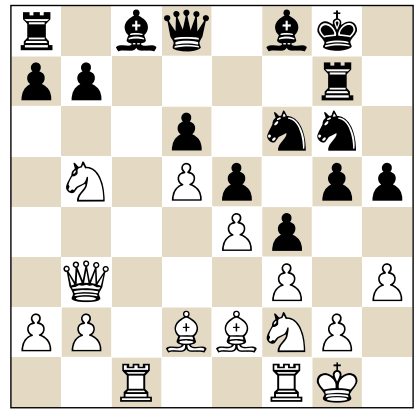
9...♘d7 10.♘d3 f5 11.♗d2 ♘f6 12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♘f2



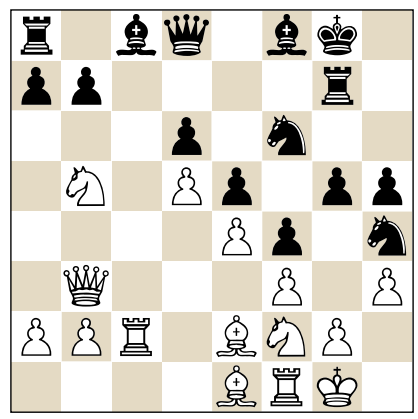
15...h5 16.h3



16...♘g6 17.♕b3 ♖f7 18.♖ac1 ♗f8 19.♘b5 ♖g7



20.♖c2 ♘h4 21.♗e1

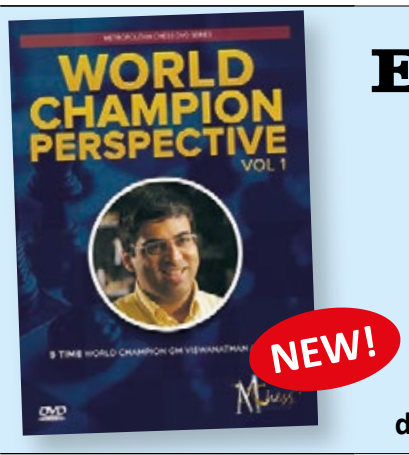


Just in a few diagrams we saw:

1. White's typical defensive structure with the knight on f2.
2. Black's standard rearrangement of his pieces on the kingside with a bishop on f8 covering d6, the rook on g7 covering c7 and supporting the …g5-g4 advance and the knights hovering dangerously around the white king.
3. The defensive manoeuvre ♗d2-e1, especially aimed against a knight on h4 which will be loose after a future …g5-g4.

I could carry on pointing out more and more of these things, but I'd probably take up a whole book too doing it! I have learnt so much about the Mar del Plata in a short period of time from studying these books: at the end, I had the feeling that I had a reasonable overview of how the opening fits together despite the fact that I hadn't remembered a single concrete line!

The only thing I'm a little unsure of is how strong you need to be to make use of these books. I would like to think that a diligent 2000/2100 player could work through this book as I have, picking out themes and organizing them and learning huge amounts about the KID and chess at the same time, but I'm not sure whether that's too optimistic. It's definitely hard work, but at least you know you're learning from top-notch material. In any case, anybody who has the Mar del Plata in their repertory needs to have these books! ■



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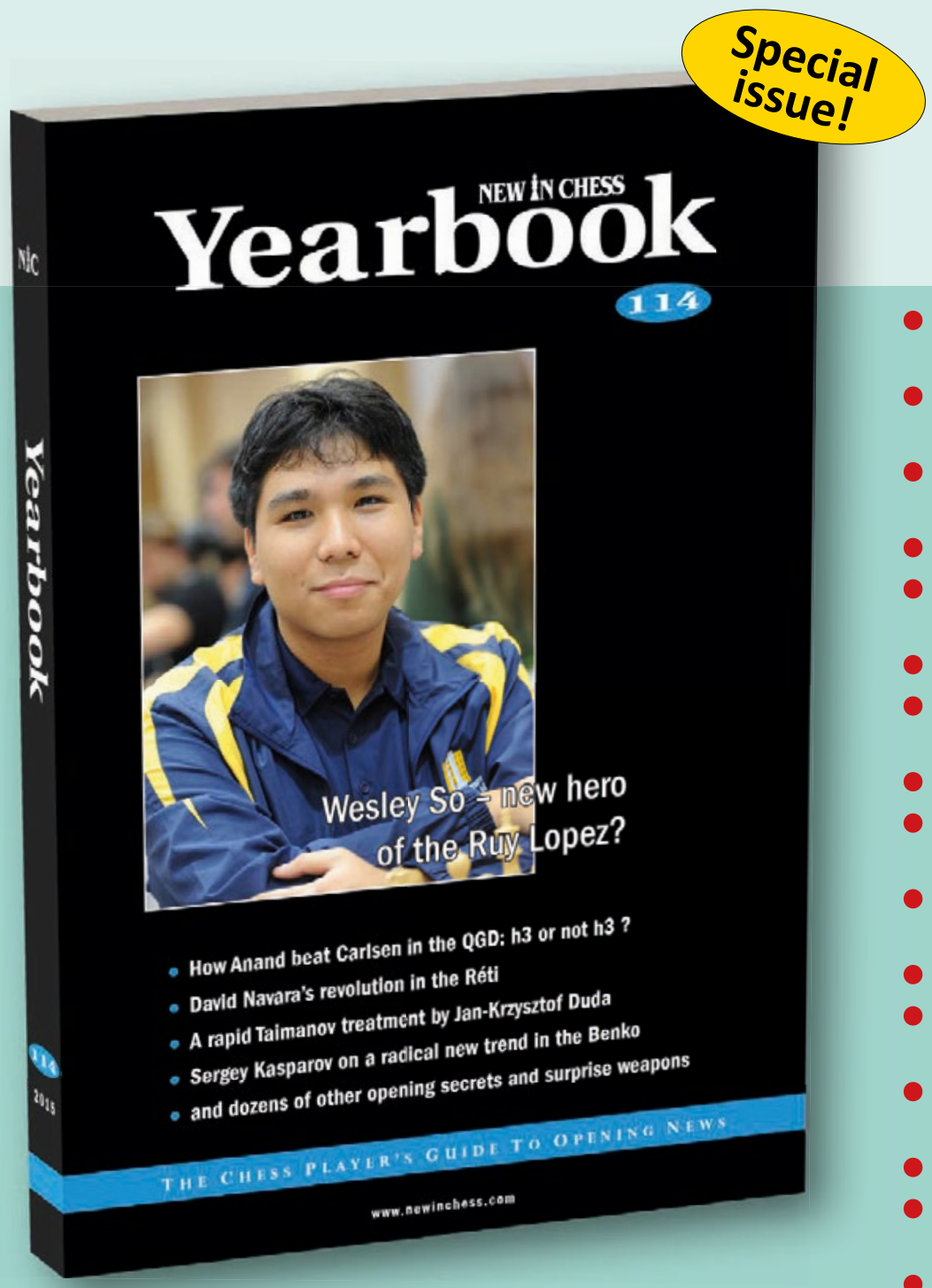
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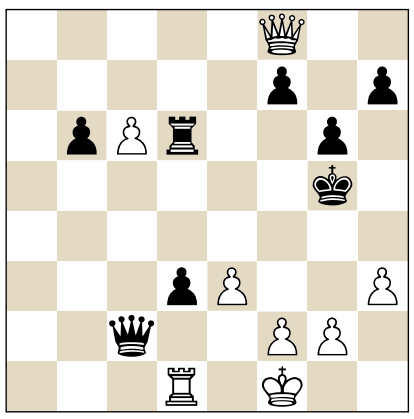
Jan Timman

The Move of the Year

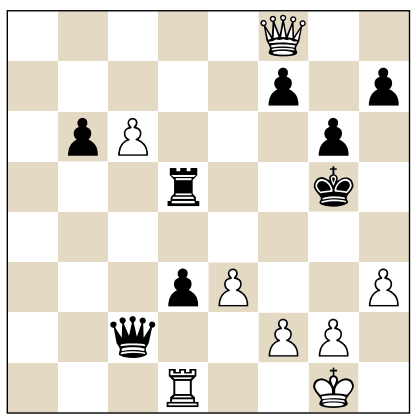
Single moves seldom write history, but Denis Khismatullin's 44.♔g1!! is definitely one for the ages. Barely had the Russian played it at the European Championship in Jerusalem or the move went viral. Jan Timman hails it as one of the most spectacular moves ever and pays tribute with a study.

The day was Friday, March 6, 2015. The place was the Jerusalem Ramada Hotel, the venue of the European Championship. In the 10th round the following position was reached in the game between Denis Khismatullin from Russia and Ukrainian ace Pavel Eljanov.



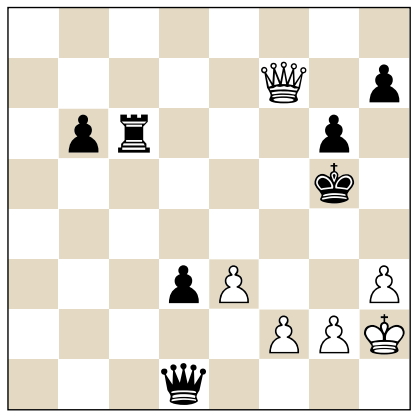
Khismatullin-Eljanov
position after 43... ♔g5

And here White played an amazing move, a move he had seen in advance, when he hoped Black would play his queen to c2 to attack the white rook.
44.♔g1!! Khismatullin allows the rook to be taken with check! The idea is that the white king will help to force its black counterpart into a mating net from h2. But contrary to what many commentators thought, this spectacular king move is not winning.
44...♕xd1+? Who wouldn't play this? Yet it is the decisive error. The white king had to go to h2 anyway to close the mating net, while the queen on c2 played a defensive role: stopping the white c-pawn.
With 44...♖d5! Black could have saved himself.

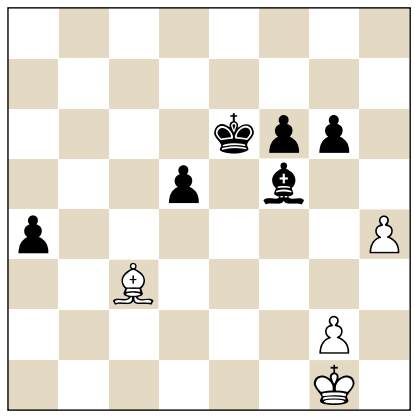


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

It's hard to find such a rook move over the board, of course, but the idea is clear: as soon as White takes the f-pawn, after a check on e7, Black can take his rook to f5. After 45.♔h2 the saving move is 45...♔f6!, e.g. 46.e4 ♖c5 47.e5+ ♔xe5 48.♖e1+ ♔d4, and the black king escapes into the white hinterland.
45.♔h2 Now there is no more defence. 45...♖d5 is met decisively by 46.c7.
45...♖xc6 46.♕e7+ ♔h6 47.♕f8+ ♔g5 48.♕xf7
Having repeated moves once Khismatullin pulled himself together and calculated the following sequence till the end.



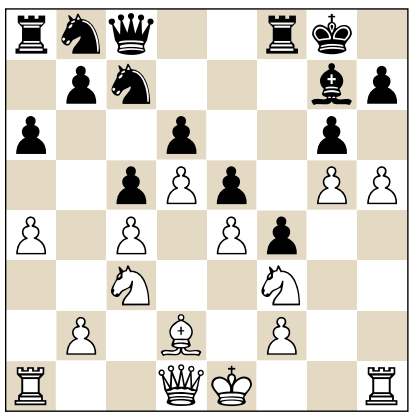
48...♖f6 49.f4+ ♔h6 50.♕xf6 ♕e2 51.♕f8+ ♔h5 52.♕g7 h6 53.♕e5+ ♔h4 54.♕f6+ ♔h5 55.f5 gxf5 56.♕xf5+ ♔h4 57.♕g6 1-0
Although 44.♔g1!! was not winning, there is little doubt that it belongs to the most spectacular moves in chess history. But for me, Shirov's



47...♗h3!! against Topalov, Linares 1998, remains the absolute No 1.
Tim Krabbé, who has drawn up a list

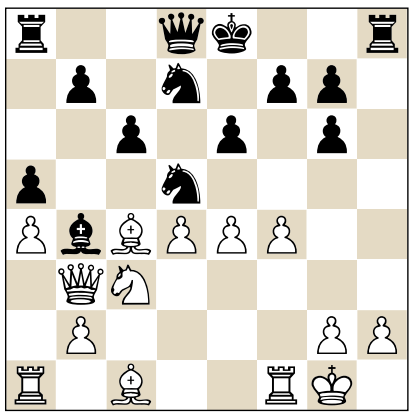
Denis 'Kg1' Khismatullin during the opening of his game against Pavel Eljanov.

of 110 'most fantastic moves', gave Spassky's desperate piece sacrifice



16...♘c6!? against Averbakh, Leningrad 1956, pride of place. But the problem with that move – although certainly fantastic – is that it would hardly have been noticed if White had simply won the game with his extra piece.

Sometimes the outcome of a game is decisive in this regard. This is borne out by the following fragment:



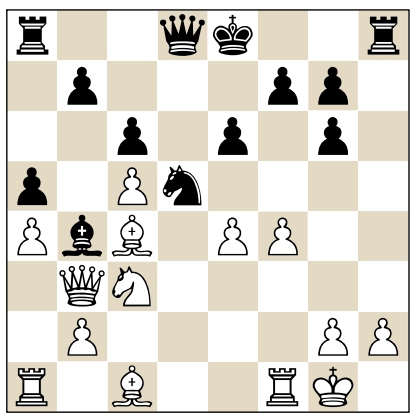
Polugaevsky-Hort
Amsterdam 1981
position after 13.e4

Here, Hort surprised his opponent with the fantastic

13...♘c5!!

This move does not feature in Krabbé's list, but it is still incredible how the great theoretician Polugaevsky has been landed into insurmountable trouble after just 13 moves.

14.dxc5 White decides to go down fighting. After 14.♕c2 ♘b6 15.♘e2 ♘xc4 16.♕xc4 ♘xe4 he would be a pawn down in a bad position.



14...♘xc3

Good enough, but 14...♗xc5+ 15.♖f2 ♖xh2! 16.♘d1 ♕h4 17.♔f1 0-0-0!, with a winning attack, would have been even stronger. If Hort had played this, everyone would remember his 13th move.

15.♗xe6 Again, Polugaevsky goes for a sharp battle. And indeed, the alternative 15.♗e3 ♘xe4 hardly looked encouraging.

15...♘e2+ 16.♔f2 ♘d4 17.♗xf7+ ♔f8 18.♕c4 ♖xh2 19.♗g8!

Denis Khismatullin: 'Amazing!'

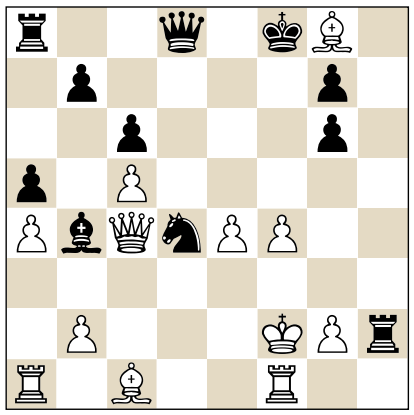
When we asked Denis Khismatullin how he had found 44.♔g1!! the Russian showed his sense of humour, telling us: 'In fact I simply picked up my king, not wanting to be mated in one move ☺.'

Then he explained: 'I think that I found 44.♔g1 by the method of elimination; in some variations I did not like the fact that the black king would penetrate to g3 and then to h2, when Black wins!

'With the same idea I considered 44.g3, but here 44...♖f6! is strong, again with a win for Black. For a long time I tried to figure out how I could not allow the king to go to g3, avoid mate in one move and defend against the threat of ...♖f6. And there came a moment when – eureka! – I found such a move! Prophylaxis, and defence against all the threats simultaneously!

'After I saw ♔g1, I thought about it for less than a minute! Naturally, I did not see all the variations, but I intuitively sensed that now White's position was out of danger.

'From my opponent's reaction it was evident that the move came as a complete surprise, and this further inspired me. In view of the time scramble, it was very difficult for Black to defend, and to find 44.♖d5 and then an entire lengthy computer variation, ending in a position where the black rook was pinned on f6 (I think that this position is close to a draw) in such a short time was unrealistic. It is very unexpected, but after the capture of the rook with check White wins easily. Amazing!'

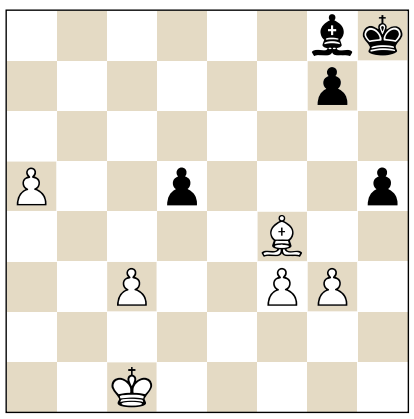


Polugaevsky also finds a fantastic move. He is suddenly threatening mate in one.

19...♕e7? Hort allows himself to be cowed. After 19...♕h4+ 20.♔e3 ♕g3+ 21.♖f3 ♕xf3+! 22.gxf3 ♘c2+ 23.♔d3 ♖d8+ White will have to withdraw his bishop, after which Black will be able to capture on a1 at leisure. If Black had handled the position like this, the game would have been world-famous.

20.♔g1! Draw. Suddenly, a dynamic balance prevails. Black has nothing better than 20...♘e2+ 21.♔f2 ♘d4.

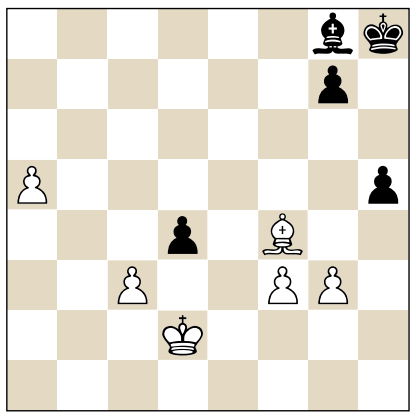
It is difficult to compare fantastic moves in the opening with study-like moves in the endgame. Shirov's 47...♗h3!! has, in fact, the impact of an endgame study. I have added a minor element, mainly to better explain the principles of the endgame.



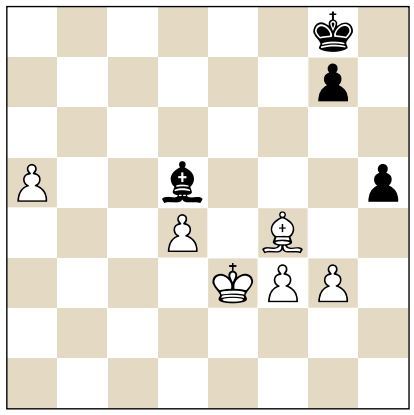
Timman 2015
White to play and draw
based on Shirov-Topalov, 1998
original

It is clear that White must deploy his king. Which route should it take? With a white passed pawn on the a-file, it seems obvious that it should penetrate via the queenside. But after 1.♔b2 d4! 2.cxd4 ♗d5 3.♔c3 ♔g8 4.♔b4 ♔f7 5.♔c5 ♔e6 White will be unable to win. This is a typical draw: the defending bishop on the long diagonal is stopping both enemy passed pawns, while the attacking king is manoeuvring on the dark squares beside the diagonal and its black counterpart is opposing it on the other side. This means that the white king should try to penetrate via the centre.

1.♔d2! d4
Here, too, this is Black's best chance. He sacrifices a pawn in order to be able to put his bishop on the long diagonal quickly.



2.cxd4 ♗d5 3.♔e3 ♔g8
An important alternative was 3...♔h7, when 4.♗g5! is the only winning move. After 4...♔g6 5.♔f4 the black king will be cut off. So Black plays his king to g8, after which Shirov-Topalov with reversed colours has arisen.



4.♗h6!! Magnificent. White sacrifices a whole bishop to force access for his king. An important consideration is that, in doing so, he creates a passed f-pawn.

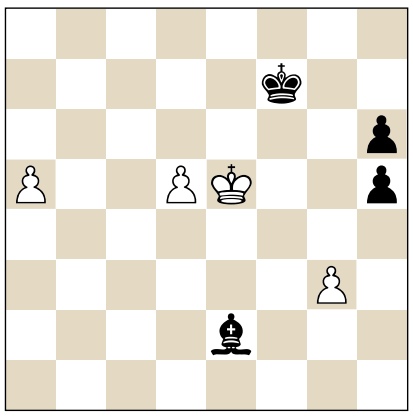
The obvious 4.♗e5 g6, on the other hand, wouldn't have yielded anything. Black's defensive line extends all the way to the kingside. If White played his king to g5, Black could take the opposition on f7.

4...♔f7 Black does not have to accept the offer at once.

5.♔f4!
White continues imperturbably.

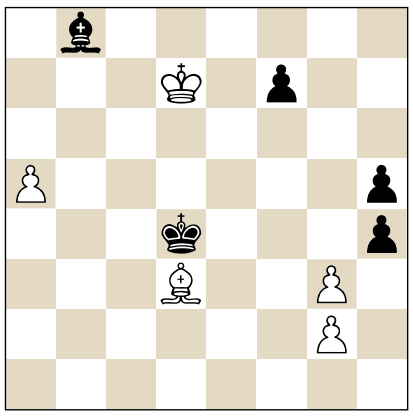
5...gxh6 6.♔e5 ♗xf3 7.d5
Cutting off the bishop's escape route.

7...♗e2



8.♔d6
Crucial. The black pieces must be dominated.

8...♔e8 8...♗c4 would have been met by 9.♔c5, and wins. **9.♔c7 ♗b5 10.d6 h4 11.gxh4 h5 12.a6** And wins.



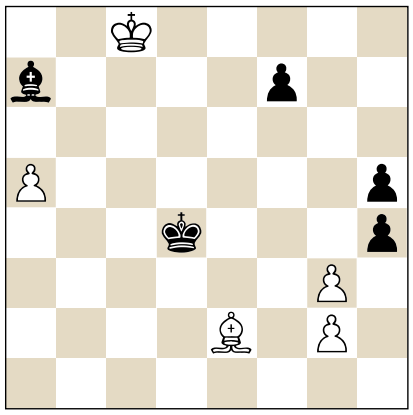
Timman 2015
White to play and win
based on Hindle-Möhring, 1964
original

Also high in Krabbé's list is a move from the endgame Hindle-Möhring, Tel Aviv 1964, on which this study is based.

The white bishop is under attack. Insufficient is 1.♗e2 in view of 1...♗xg3, and the kingside set-up offers White no winning chances. So he must first force the black bishop to go to a7.

1.♔c8! ♗a7 2.♗e2

If Black now captures on g3, the win is elementary. But he has a resource.



2...h3! 3.gxh3 h4!

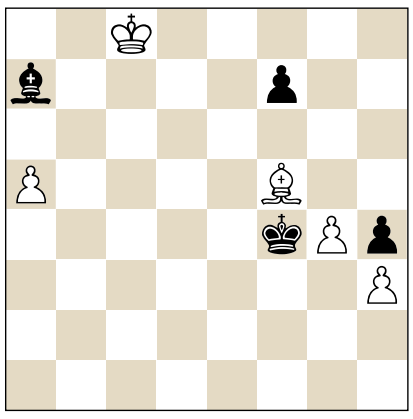
Trying to saddle White with useless doubled pawns on the h-file.

4.g4 ♔e5

After 4...♔e4, both 5.♗c4 and 5.♗b5 are good, the point being that 5...f5 will in both cases be met by 6.♗d3+!, winning. With the king on e5, however, the advance of the f-pawn is a threat, making White's next move forced.

5.♗d3! ♔f4 6.♗f5!

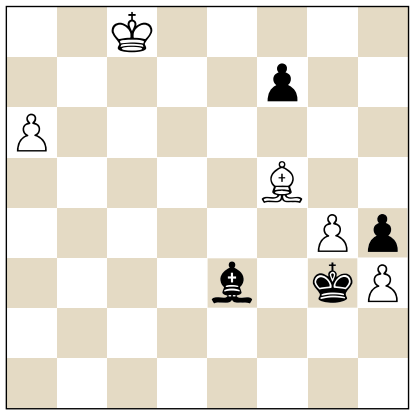
Indirectly covering the h-pawn. White is preparing the deathblow.



6...♗e3 6...♔g3 would have run into the magnificent 7.♗e6!!.

7.a6 Necessary, since otherwise the black king would have penetrated on g3 unopposed. Now Hindle-Möhring with reversed colours has arisen, with the only difference that the white king and the black bishop are in slightly different places. But this is of no consequence for the point of the endgame.

7...♔g3



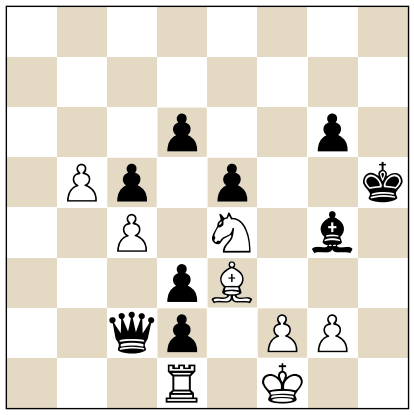
8.♗e6!!

Möhring's discovery. If White plays his pawn to f6, he will forever be unable to capture the h-pawn. And if he takes the bishop, the g-pawn will decide.

8...♔xh3 9.g5+ ♔g3 10.♗xf7

And wins.

I will now return to Khismatullin-Eljanov. I asked Harold van der Heijden whether a study with such an idea was already in existence. He told me that he had not found anything like it. So I decided to set to work myself, with the following result.

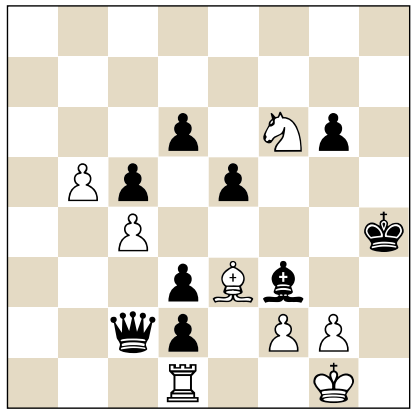


Timman 2015
White to play and win
based on Khismatullin-Eljanov, 2015 original

This doesn't look much like the Jerusalem game, but the principle is the same. White is going to take his king to h2 in order to take square h3 away from the enemy king. But first he must turn up the heat on the king.

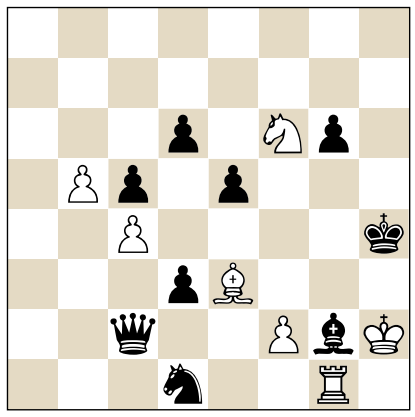
1.♘f6+ ♔h4 2.♔g1! ♗f3!

As in Khismatullin-Eljanov, Black should not take the rook.



3.♔h2! Imperturbable. **3...♗xg2**

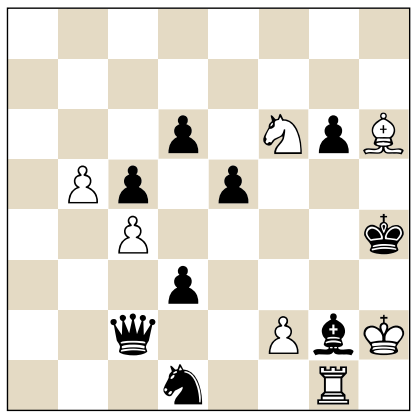
Black has succeeded in averting an immediate mate. Now White is going to deploy his rook. **4.♖g1! d1♘!**



The only defence. Black is threatening to capture the bishop.

5.♗h6!

The only safe square for the bishop.



5...♕xf2

After 5...d2 6.♖xg2 ♕f5 7.♗xd2 ♕xf6 8.♗g5+ the white b-pawn also decides in the end.

6.♗g5+! ♔xg5 7.♘e4+ ♔f5 8.♘xf2 ♘e3 9.♖xg2 d2 10.b6

And wins. ■

Anish Giri

Watching with Anish

What do chess pros do in between tournaments? Very much the same as what many of you readers do: follow the chess action around the globe. Contributing editor **Anish Giri** guides you through some of the recent highlights. Enjoy and learn!

Fighting for prizes in major competitions and spending hours, if not days, on the critical variations of the Grünfeld in his home lab, the top player's fate is such that the ordinary amateur may well forget that the Gran Maestro in the end is a huge chess fan himself as well. Small wonder that World Champion Magnus Carlsen won the chess trivia Pub Quiz at the Reykjavik Open, having arguably read more on chess than all amateurs combined! Unlike many other fields of occupation, chess is something that you don't choose as your profession. It's the other way round: chess finds you, chooses you and keeps haunting you. Even though Garry Kasparov has shifted the focus of his life entirely onto politics, he, too, knows full well that he has no choice but to follow the latest games. I know, because I've had the privilege of observing him getting absorbed by chess a couple of times years after his retirement.

Being a professional player myself, I can tell you that I am not too bored in-between my tournaments either. After the Grand Prix in Tbilisi (a tale which New In Chess wisely decided should be told by the winner, Evgeny Tomashevsky) I had a period of rest till the next top-level battle, the Shamkir tournament to the memory of Vugar Gashimov, which will feature in the next issue of our magazine.

During the weeks that I was at home there was always something to watch. To entertain you I've picked games from the European Championship in Jerusalem, the Aeroflot Open in Moscow and the Women's World Championship in Sochi.

Even though the tournament is ignored by the majority of the chess elite, the European Individual Championship once again gathered a fair share of the best players of Europe (including stars like Etienne Bacrot, David Navara and who not). And once again the winner was a national coach of the Russian team!

Evgeny Najer, following in the foot-

steps of Vladimir Potkin and Alexander Motylev (European Champions in 2011 and 2014), managed to use his fighting spirit as well as his top class preparation to clinch the title. The second echelon of the Russian chess elite has got what many top players can only dream of: a strong desire to prove themselves and an eagerness to fight their way through the crowd. And believe me, there was quite some crowd in Jerusalem.

The following game was played on the first table in the penultimate round. The group of contenders was quite large, featuring, amongst them, the two heroes of this story – Evgeny Najer and Anton Korobov. Since the tournament also served as a qualifier for the prestigious World Cup later this year in Baku, many players in the leading group had started their sailing campaign towards the ultimate goal of qualifying and were making shorter and shorter draws.

This game is not one of those.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

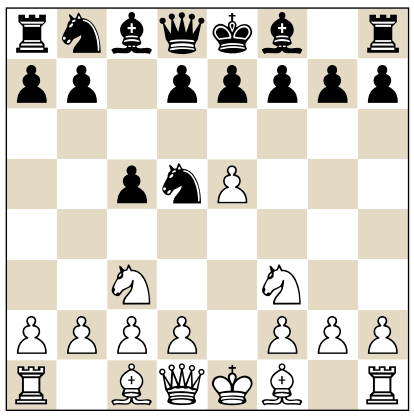
SI 43.4 – B29
Evgeny Najer
Anton Korobov
Jerusalem 2015 (10)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6?!

A rather risky and unsuccessful choice of opening – something that's easy to point out after you know the result of the game, but in this particular case, I don't think that Anton Korobov was even aware of the details and plans in this variation. It has to be said, though, that Korobov is a very powerful player, clearly with ambitions of his own, so once he got back in the lead, he was no doubt hoping to capitalize on that.

Anton usually goes for 2...d6!, and even though he was probably afraid of some opening preparation, things couldn't have gone worse than they did. And if you are really desperate, you can go for 2...e6. You can study my latest games, where the white queen usually ends up on f3 and a black pawn on h5 (Karjakin-Giri 1-0, 2014, and Radjabov-Giri ½-½, Saric-Giri 0-1, Fressinet-Giri ½-½, Mamedyarov-Giri ½-½, all 2015).

3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3



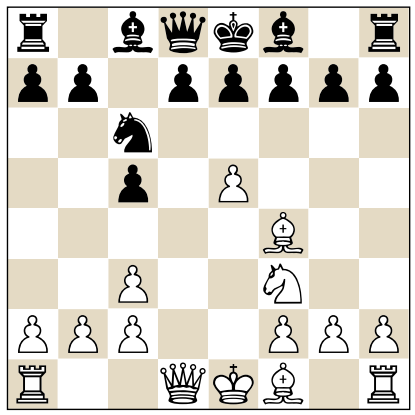
4...♘xc3

4...e6!? is another variation, one of those which you might encounter in a simultaneous display against some old bald guy with a beard and fashionable round glasses (yes, I had a complicated childhood). He will then tell you that he has played it all his life and you were simply unlucky that you didn't have a chance to prepare.

What I am talking about is 5.♘xd5 exd5 6.d4 ♘c6 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.♕xd5 ♕b6 9.♗c4 ♗xf2+. By the way, not only the guy with the beard and the glasses plays this variation, but Evgeny Najer also tried it out, in 2014 against Savchenko.

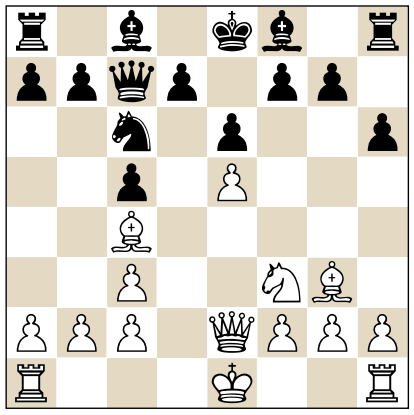
This makes the opening choice of Korobov even stranger, but then again, we probably don't know the whole story.

5.dxc3 ♘c6 6.♗f4



6...e6 6...♕b6!? is the latest trend, introduced by Alexander Ipatov. The idea is quite delicate. Black provokes the move b3 in order to exploit it later on, when White castles queenside: 7.b3 h6 8.h4 ♕c7 9.♕d2 e6 10.0-0-0 a6, followed by ...b5-c4, is Alexander's plan. He did quite well with it in the World Rapid and Blitz Championship last year. A nice weapon for the faster time-controls!

7.♗c4 h6 8.♕e2 ♕c7 9.♗g3



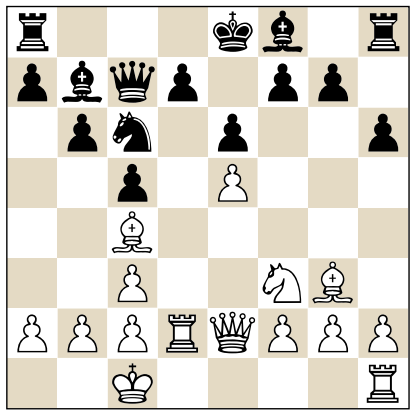
It is more common to castle queenside at once, but it is not a matter of principle here. White can make his useful moves in any order he wishes.

9...b6?!

This natural move shows that Black wasn't very familiar with this position. The position is quite strange, yet pretty easy to understand. White enjoys more space and will easily prevent the...d6/...d5 break. Black can develop all his pieces comfortably, but will have problems creating counterplay unless he starts now.

Therefore he had to start the queenside expansion immediately: 9...a6!, with the idea of following up with... b5-c4, grabbing some space on the queenside. Later Black will decide whether to castle queenside or kingside: 10.0-0-0 b5 11.♗d3 c4 12.♗e4 ♗b7, and the position looks far more comfortable than the one later on in the game. Black has the c5-square for his bishop and he might start poking White's queenside pawns with ...b5-b4 at any moment.

10.0-0-0 ♗b7 11.♖d2

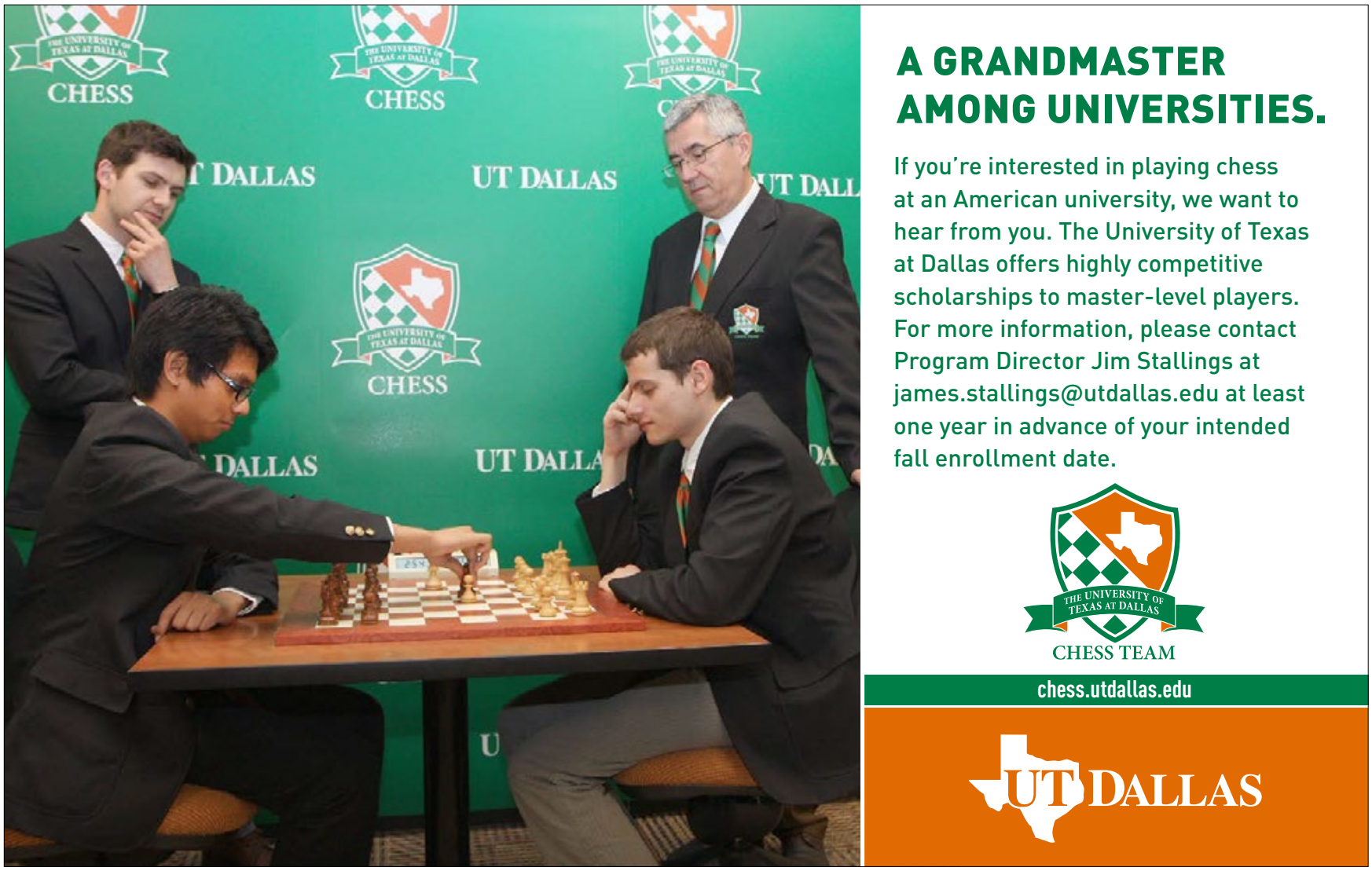


11...0-0-0?! There is a good saying for such situations: better late than never. Black could have started the queenside expansion here, too.

However, I have noticed (from my own, at times painful, experience!) that many mistakes in chess are caused by the urge to be consistent. It's as if you owe it to someone that you continue once you have started. No! You don't! Modern chess is about looking at each position independently.

True, Black has just played ...b7-b6, but if the pawn belongs on b5, then he should admit he was wrong and push it there anyway. So: 11...a6 12.♖hd1 b5 13.♗d3 (13.♖xd7 looks like a punishment for being too weak and too slow, but it's not that simple: 13...♕c8!, and Black will have to decide where to castle. Maybe for now he should keep his options open with a move like 13...♗e7).

12.♖hd1 ♔b8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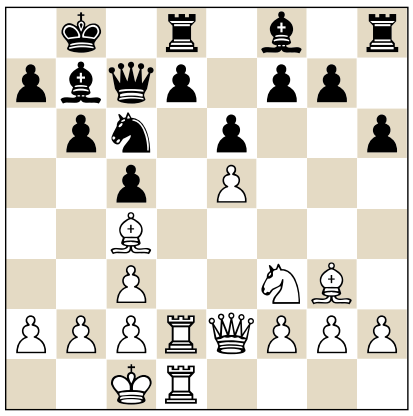
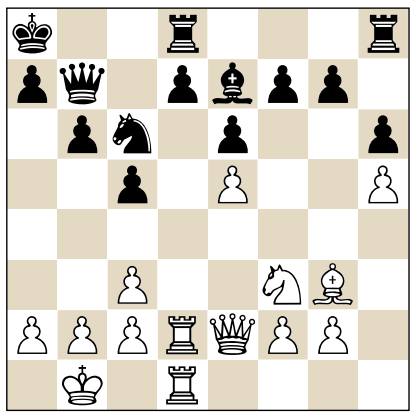
Evgeny Najer vs Anton Korobov: a remarkably straightforward win at such a tense moment in the championship.

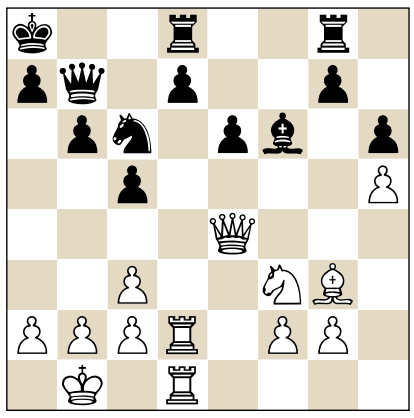


13.♗a6!
Now White has control of all the light squares on the queenside and he enjoys a stable plus. The d7-pawn is forever weak and on the kingside, no matter how solid he is, Black has no plan of his own.
13...♗e7
13...g5!? gains some space, but since it's not really clear what will follow next, I understand his hesitation to commit himself to such a weakening.
14.h4 ♔a8
Black is solid but incredibly passive and for now he chooses to sit still. This rarely ends well, not only because the stronger side will eventually find a way to break through, but also because the weaker side is often unable to sit still. At some point we all want to move something forward.
14...♗xa6 15.♕xa6 g5!? would create some counterplay, not too exciting I must admit, but at least White will have to think a little of how to deal with the open g- or h-file.

15.♔b1 ♕c8 16.♗xb7+ ♕xb7 17.h5!
And now Black really can't move anymore. What will White do next? Well, don't worry about Evgeny Najer. He knows his little moves, such as ♕e4, ♖d3, a3, ♗h4... Slowly but surely, as every Russian schoolboy knows!

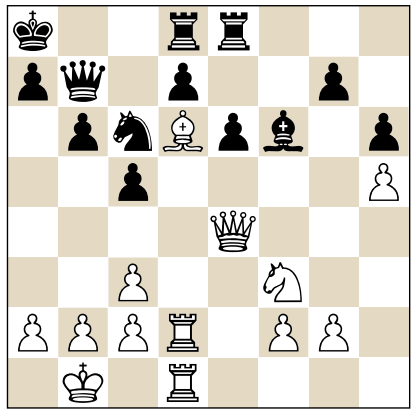


17...♖hg8 18.♕e4 f5 As expected, Korobov does try to do something. At the end of the day, there is no choice.
19.exf6 ♗xf6



20.♗d6!

From now on it's really a matter of choice for White. Black is tied up and cannot exchange any pieces without losing material (the d7-pawn is the one that drags Black down).
Nevertheless, Evgeny shows some class, improving his position little by little and not getting distracted by opportunities on the side, for example 20.♗h4!?.
20...♖ge8



21.♖d3! I have only one word for this move: classy!
21...e5 In a bad position all moves are bad. Believe it or not, unlike many other such sayings, this one can be really quite true.

'Don't worry about Evgeny Najer. He knows his little moves. Slowly but surely, as every Russian schoolboy knows!'

21...♘e7 was probably the plan, but it will end up losing a pawn after 22.♕xb7+ ♔xb7 23.♘e5, threatening 24.♘f7. And now it's either the g7- or the d7-pawn, but one of them will fall.
22.a4
22.♘d2! was a tinge more precise.

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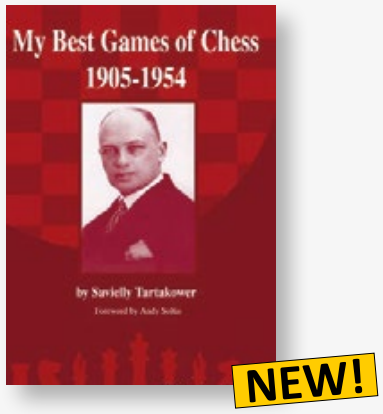

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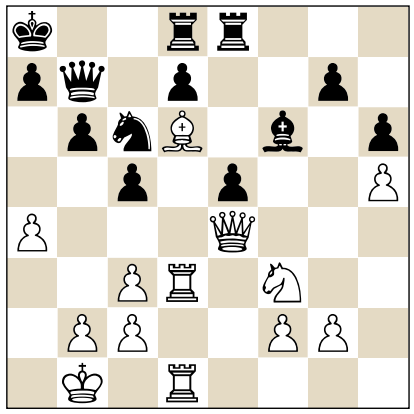
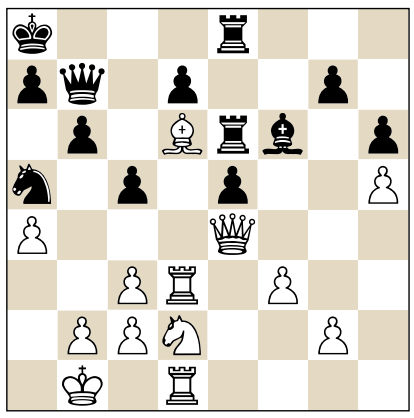
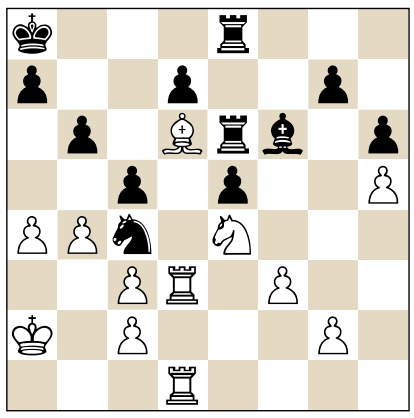


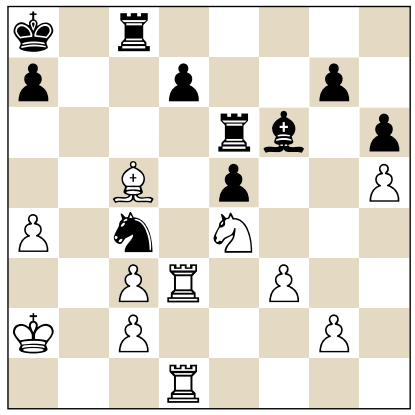
22...♖e6?!
22...♘b4! would have been the last chance to confuse the persistent Russian, when 23.♕xb7+ ♔xb7 24.cxb4 e4 25.♖e3 exf3 26.♖xf3 cxb4 27.♗xb4 ♖e4 gives Black excellent drawing chances, but 23.♖e3! would ensure that White stays in the driver's seat.
23.♘d2! The c4-square looks like an ideal outpost for the knight. Note how many squares White controls and how little ground Black has in return.
23...♖de8 24.f3 ♘a5



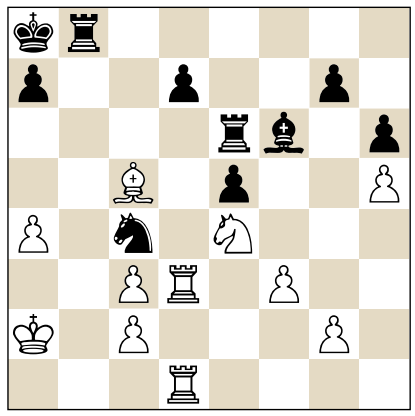
25.b4! It's about time for White to open up the position, now that all his pieces are on their ideal squares.
25...♕xe4 26.♘xe4 ♘c4 27.♔a2



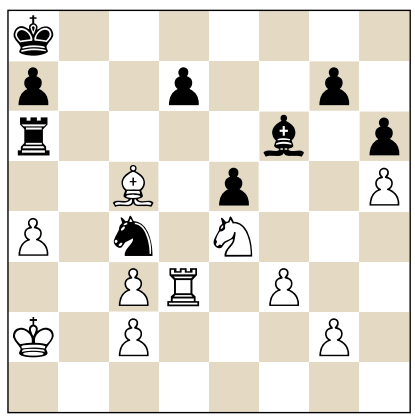
Black's position is a disaster. If you don't see why, keep reading New In Chess and one day you will! Hint: it has something to do with backward pawns and weak squares!
27...♖c8 28.bxc5 bxc5 29.♗xc5



29...♖b8? Now the d7-pawn will finally fall, too. 29...♖ec6! would have kept the game going: 30.♗f2 d6 31.♖b1, followed by ♖b4, will mean an extra pawn and a better position, but at least the game is still on.



30.♖b1! ♖xb1 31.♔xb1 ♖a6 32.♔a2 The d7-pawn won't run away. The rest is easy.



32...d6 33.♗xd6 ♖xa4+ 34.♔b3 ♘b6 35.♗f8 ♖a1 36.c4 ♖b1+ 37.♔a2 ♖h1 38.c5 ♘c4 39.c6 ♔b8 40.♖c3 Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

After an unfortunate interruption of a couple of years, one of the strongest traditional Opens, the Aeroflot Open in Moscow, came back to life and lured a strong field to the legendary Cosmos Hotel, the venue of the 1994 Moscow Olympiad. Acting as a qualifier for the elite tournament in Dortmund, the Aeroflot Open attracted some of the world's best, including Mamedyarov, Vallejo, Nepomniachtchi and many more. In the end, it was Ian Nepomniachtchi who, in his usual quick and effortless manner, topped the field, scoring an impressive 7 out of 9. Ian undoubtedly played some good games, but it was a jewel by another Russian that made the deepest impression on me.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

KP 7.2 – C44
Vadim Zviagintsev
Benjamin Bok
Moscow 2015 (3)

This is the kind of dynamic chess that I love to see, full of surprising resources and with a thirst for initiative. While I followed it live I was rooting for the 'wrong' side, as my friend and colleague, Dutch GM Benjamin Bok, went down, but credits go to the experienced Russian GM Vadim Zviagintsev, who showed that he can still play an impressive game of chess from time to time.

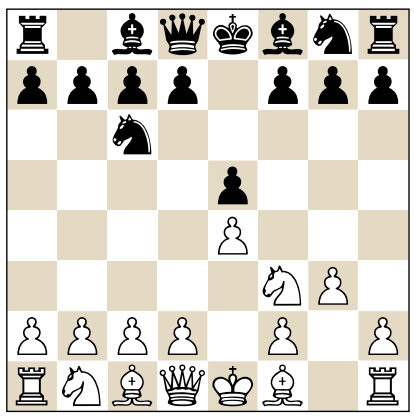
I must say that all I knew about Vadim Zviagintsev, except that he is extremely strong and used to be a very talented junior (a match Zviagintsev-Svidler from 1992 comes to mind) is that with white he has a passion for the King's Gambit, knights on a3 and queens on e2 in the opening, and that with Black he enjoys defending passive isolated pawn positions.

In this game I had a chance to witness another side of him, which in fact cannot be called a real surprise if you remember his 'evergreen', the brilliancy he won against Cifuentes in Wijk aan Zee in 1995.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.g3!?

I got to know this variation from Magnus Carlsen, who mentioned it to me before our blitz game in Norway Chess last year. As it turned out, it was one of the jewels that Veselin Topalov had prepared especially for that blitz event, which served as the drawing of lots for the classical part of the tournament.

> 'Before Magnus could continue drilling my brains with this nonsense we had to start our own game.'

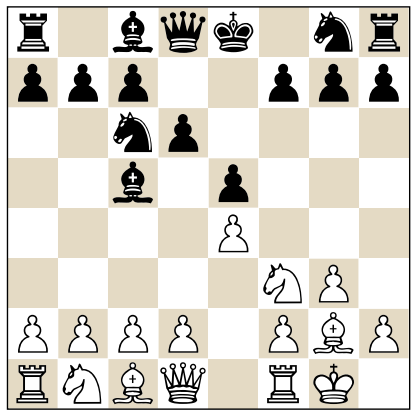


3...♗c5

Magnus' suggestion was 3...f5. He told me he was calculating exchange sacrifices in the style of 4.exf5 e4 (or in similar fashion 4...d5!? 5.d4?! e4 6.♘h4 ♗e7!) 5.♘h4 ♗e7 6.♕h5+ ♔f8 7.♘g6+ hxg6 8.♕xh8, and before he could continue drilling my brains with this nonsense we had to start our own game.

Although there is no denying that he is creative, the World Champion played a pretty dull move when Topalov confronted him with 3.g3!? and went 3...♘f6. The game continued 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗g2 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.♖e1 ♗a7 9.♘a3!? ♘e7 10.♘c2, and in the end Black won after 35 moves.

4.♗g2 d6 5.0-0



5...f5!?

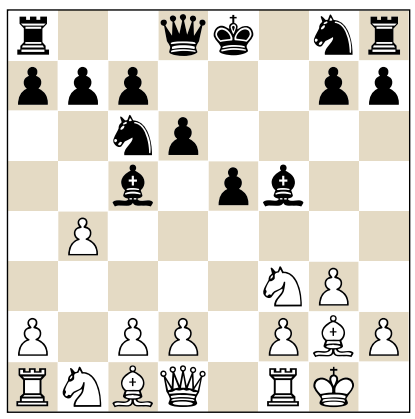
A risky, but very sound decision. It is easy to blame this move for what happened in the game, but it seems that Benjamin went astray later.

5...♘f6 keeps the game more solid. Now White can benefit from not having developed the knight to c3 yet by developing it to d2 or to a3, like Topalov. That's essentially the point of this pointless system.

6.exf5 ♗xf5

Now White would have liked to get in c3/d4, but the immediate 7.c3 runs into 7...♗d3!. To proceed, White has two entirely different ideas.

7.b4!



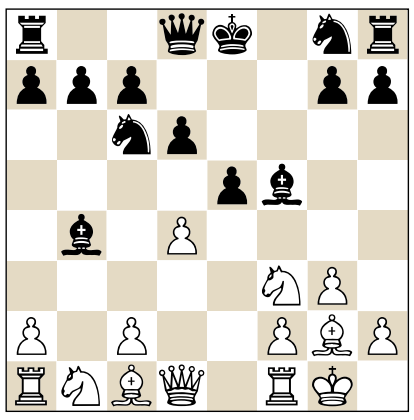
A radical solution to the problem. This idea, borrowed from the Evans Gambit, is very appealing here.

Alternatively, 7.♘h4!? is less flashy,

but is just as effective in achieving the central breakthrough. After the bishop has been deflected from the d3-square, White will be ready to proceed with c3, threatening to open the centre while the black king is still on e8. Generally, with the knight still on g8, Black's position feels a little worrisome. However, he seems to be doing just fine after 7...♗d7 8.c3 ♘f6 9.d4 ♗b6! and Black looks quite mobilized and ready to castle.

7...♗xb4 8.d4

Already here, 8.c3 ♗a5 could be included, but there is no difference.



8...♘ge7?

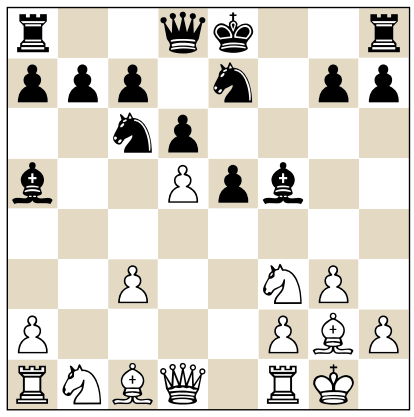
The desire to develop the knight is understandable, but this move allows a very unpleasant sequence.

8...♕d7!? keeps the important a4-e8 diagonal closed. Black's position looks quite dangerous, but it's not easy for White to get to him.

But 8...♘f6! was the right way to develop. Now, after 9.c3 ♗a5, the knight on c6 has the e7-square to retreat to, while if White goes after the pawns with 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♕a4, Black has 11...0-0! 12.♘xe5 ♗b6! and takes over the initiative. Splendid!

9.c3 ♗a5 10.d5!

Closing the position may look surprising at first sight, but the closed nature of the centre gives Black merely an illusion of safety.

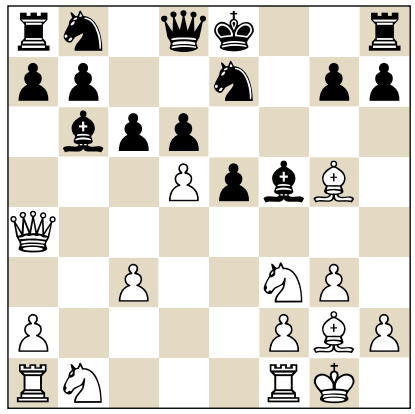


10...♘b8 11.♕a4+ c6 12.♗g5!

Pinning the knight, while at the same time hinting at the vulnerability of the a5-bishop.

12...♗b6

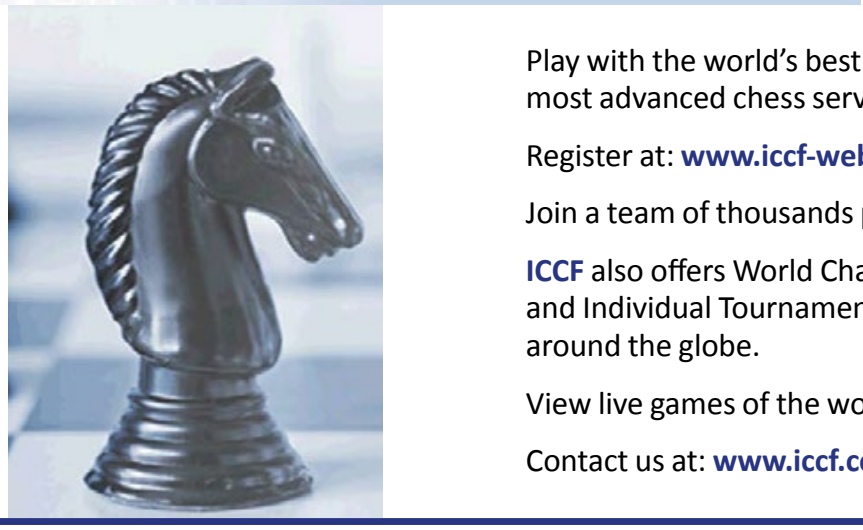
Now, having a full move before Black will finally castle, White has a pleasant choice of options.



13.♘h4

13.♘d4!? would probably lead to the same thing as in the game, but I have to admit this move is slightly more spectacular.

Developing with 13.♘bd2!? can never be bad, and here this move seems to work quite well indeed. There are sacrifices in the air: 13...0-0 14.♘c4!? (14.♘xe5 has the nice point of exploiting the shaky position of the e7-knight as well as that of the b6-bishop, but after the cold-blooded 14...h6! – bad is 14...dxe5? 15.d6! ♕xd6 16.♘c4!, and the queen will be overloaded, as the b6-bishop is basically protected just once, which also goes for the knight on e7 – Black seems to keep his position together by a miracle) 14...♗c5, and now White can set up a highly sophisticated network of pins: 15.♕b3! cxd5 16.♘d4!!, when no words can explain...



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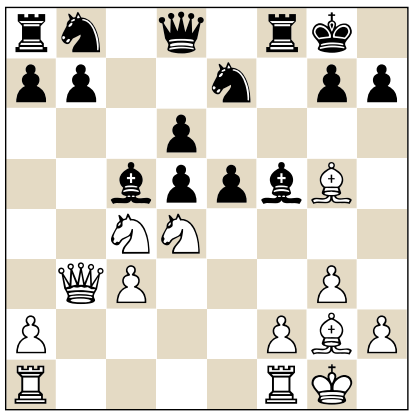
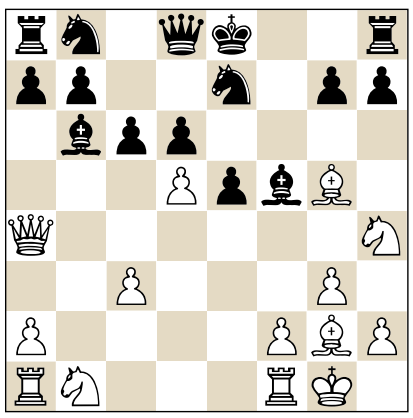
Vadim Zviagintsev: brilliant win with mega pawn promotion.

DAVID LLADA



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

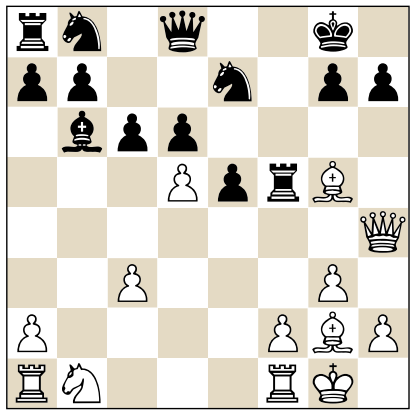
16...exd4 17.♗xd5+ ♔h8 18.♕xb7 ♘d7 19.♖ae1 and everything is pinned and overloaded. White will regain his piece and even more.



13...0-0

More maximalist was 13...♗d7!?, but I can imagine that once given the chance to castle, Black wanted to grab it. Indeed, you never know when the opportunity will present itself again.

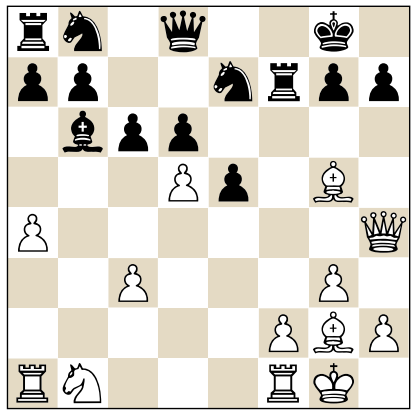
14.♘xf5 ♖xf5 15.♕h4



15...♖f7

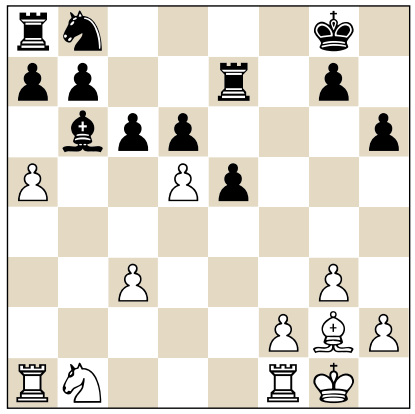
15...♖xg5!? was a way to try and change the course of the game. It was definitely worth a try, but White remains on top: 16.♕xg5 cxd5 17.♕d2! (breaking up the strong pawn centre) 17...e4 18.c4! dxc4 19.♘c3! ♘bc6 (on 19...d5? 20.♘xd5! is the point: 20...♕xd5 21.♕xd5+ ♘xd5 22.♗xe4 ♘c7 23.♗xb7 ♘d7 24.♗xa8 ♘xa8 25.♖fe1!, and White is close to winning here) 20.♗xe4, and while the material is balanced, Black is likely to lose one of the weak pawns in the near future.

16.a4!? Adding some extra pressure on the queenside. 16.♘d2 ♕f8 would lead to a similar endgame after White takes on e7. Essentially, the problem is that the c6-pawn is doomed, as the knight on b8 will really have to develop at some point.



16...h6 With an extra pawn Black's chances of survival seem quite realistic in the endgame, but of course it's obvious that the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal will eventually lead to him losing the c6-pawn, with White pressing for 'free'.

17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♕xe7 ♖xe7 19.a5



19...♗d8? The bishop would be doing a good job on a more active position. The plan that Black is aiming for makes some sense, but he is just too late. He should have tried 19...♗c5 20.a6!? b6 21.♘d2 (21.dxc6 ♖c7!) 21...♘d7 22.dxc6 ♘f6 23.♘e4 ♔f7, and White has a nasty pawn on c6, but Black is extremely solid and has good chances to survive.

20.♘d2 ♖c7

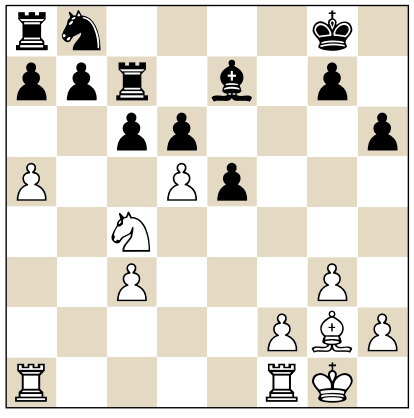
Part of the plan. Black wants to protect both the c6- and d6-pawns and develop his b8-knight eventually. Unfortunately a surprise is coming.

21.♘c4 ♗e7?

Following the planned regrouping and missing a spectacular tactic.

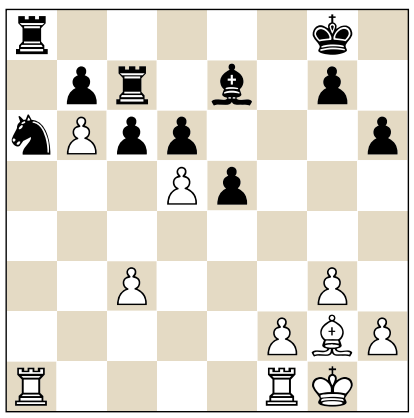
21...♘a6 would have kept the game

going, but obviously it's a disaster by now: 22.♘xd6 ♗e7 23.♘c4, when White dominates, although Black has no reason yet to throw in the towel.

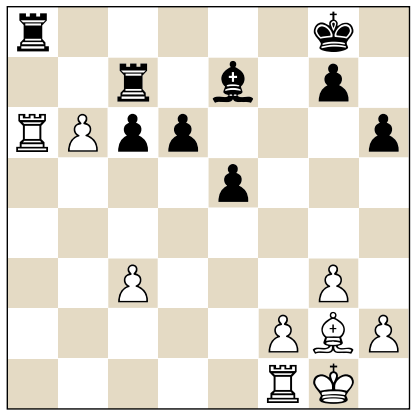


22.♘b6! As a child I was always fond of tricks connected with this mega pawn promotion, something resembling the queening in the game of draughts. I remember that my passion for this motif was sparked after I encountered the following miniature in my first real chess book: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♗f5 4.♕b3 ♕b6 5.cxd5 ♕xb3 6.axb3 ♗xb1? 7.dxc6! ♗e4? 8.♖xa7!! ♖xa7 9.c7 1-0.

22...axb6 23.axb6 ♘**a6** Now anything wins, but the ruthless Russian goes for the most spectacular way.



24.dxc6! bxc6 25.♖xa6!



Making sure that it's the b6-pawn that wins the game! Black had seen enough and finally resigned.

■ ■ ■

The Women's World Chess Championship is a thought-provoking phenomenon that is not easy to fathom. In short, it consists of a knock-out World Championship tournament, a Grand Prix cycle and a World Championship match. The knock-out tournament produces a World Champion, the Grand Prix produces a Challenger, and the Match, between the knock-out World Champion and the Grand Prix Challenger, determines another World Champion. Confused? The winner of the match, who is World Champion, as you may have understood (if not, don't worry, it isn't all that easy) does not automatically guarantee herself a spot in the next World Championship match. She will either have to win the knock-out tournament to keep her title or qualify through the Grand Prix to be able to regain it.

Before the knock-out championship in Sochi (this is the one we will talk about shortly), the situation was as follows: having won the Match in Taizhou in 2013, the World Champion was Hou Yifan (who beat Ushenina in, let's be frank, a rather one-sided struggle – 5½-1½). Then the very same Hou Yifan also won the 2013-14 Grand Prix. But the Chinese former prodigy did not take part in the knock-out championship in Sochi. When the dates of that event were finally fixed, she had already committed herself to playing a tournament in Hawaii.

Even with the strongest female player missing, or perhaps exactly because of it, the World Championship in Sochi was a spectacular happening that lasted for almost a month. In the end, the toughest and the luckiest one (merely a figure of speech, of course, it's never about luck!) was the younger of the Muzychuk sisters, Maria. Although she often operates in the shadow of her sister Anna, she is a force to be reckoned with: rated over 2500, something only few women can brag about. Although she lost the first game, she kept fighting, through the fire and the ice, hanging in where others would already have considered throwing in the towel.

The first sign that Maria might be that special one was when she eliminated the top-favourite, Humpy Koneru from India, who is rightly considered one of Hou Yifan's biggest rivals. Before this game Humpy had won all of her first six games, a remarkable streak.

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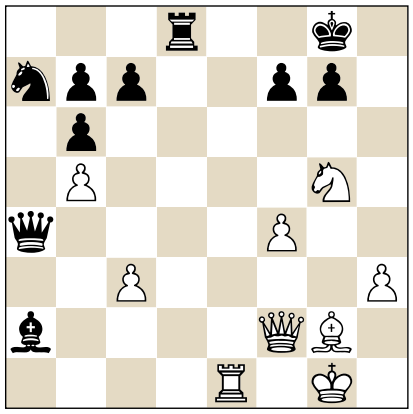


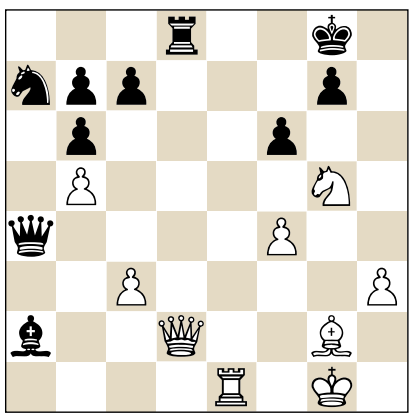
Muzychuk-Koneru
Sochi 2015 (4.1)
position after 25.♘xg5

25...f6??

A blunder. Let me stress, I don't think Humpy had missed the defensive idea, but having won her first six games and having had a comfortable position from the opening again, she must have become a bit over-confident. By now her position was already worrisome, but there was still a way out.

She should have played 25...♖d1!, and without rooks, Black has much less to fear. For example: 26.♗f1 ♖xe1 27.♕xe1 ♕a3!?, and the queen will come back to the defence and Black's extra pawn is a good argument against White's initiative. The position is just level.

26.♕d2!!

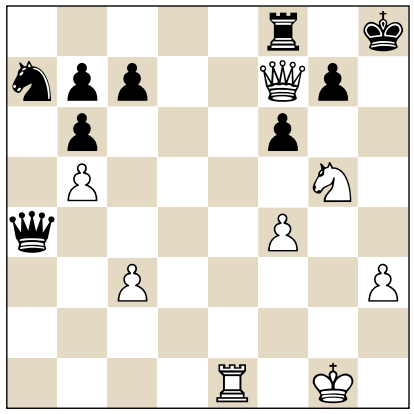


Ouch. A back-rank classic at such an important moment!

26...♖f8

The tables have been cruelly turned. With control of both the central open files, White has a deadly attack.

27.♗d5+ ♗xd5 28.♕xd5+ ♔h8 29.♕f7!



Knight on the rim, back rank – children, learn!! Black resigned.

Koneru struck back in the classical part of the match, so once again a tie-break had to be played. Following a comfortable draw in the first game, Humpy was dramatically knocked out when in the second game she missed a venomous tactic in a winning position.

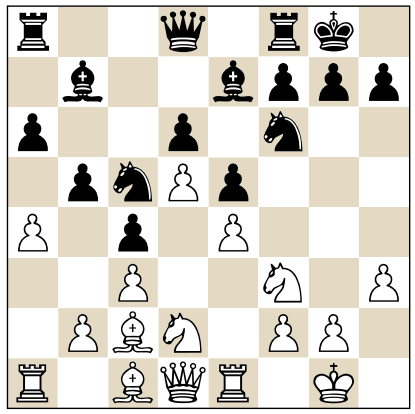
In the final Maria was facing another strong opponent, the experienced and friendly WGM Natalia 'Twitter-Machine' Pogonina from Russia. Seeing her Twitter page (164K followers, srsly) one assumes that she has already been World Champion a couple of times, or at the very least a Miss World, but it was only here and now that she had a real chance to enter chess history. However, it was not (yet) meant to be.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

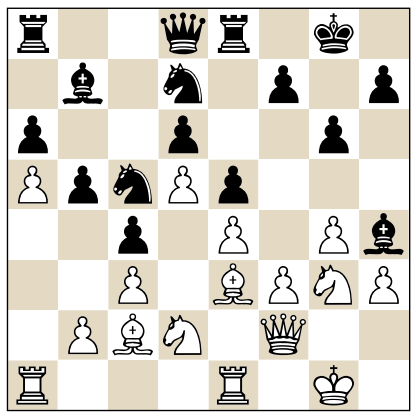
RL 25.3 – C95
Maria Muzychuk
Natalia Pogonina
Sochi 2015 (6.2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗e7 7.♖e1 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.a4 ♗b7 12.♘bd2 c5 13.d5 c4 14.♗c2 ♘c5

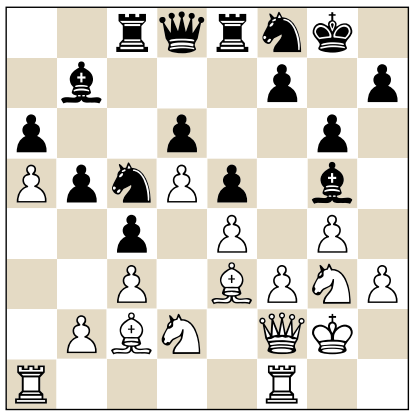
White has slightly misplayed the move order in the Breyer Variation of the Ruy Lopez and got a standard position which is slightly better for Black than usual. In the main line Black usually has to go ...♖e8 and ...♗f8 first, waiting for White to go a4, after which he/she will be able to lock the position with ...c5-c4 (with the pawn still on a2 White has the unpleasant pawn break b2-b3 cxb3 axb3!). Trying to surprise each other, both players end up in totally unfamiliar territory, which quickly showed. The following is not how such positions are conventionally played, although I do have to say that this closed position is extremely complicated and no matter how you play it, you will never have a guarantee that your manoeuvres actually improve your position instead of harming it. Still, I would advise against the move f2-f3 by White and the moves ...♖c8 and ...♘f8 by Black. Those really make no sense to me under any circumstances. But then again, this is just what I feel.



15.♘f1 ♖e8 16.♘g3 g6 17.♗e3 ♕c7 18.♘d2 ♗f8 19.♕e2 ♘fd7 20.f3 ♘b6 21.a5 ♘bd7 22.♘h1 ♗e7 23.g4 ♕d8 24.♕f2 ♗h4 25.♘g3



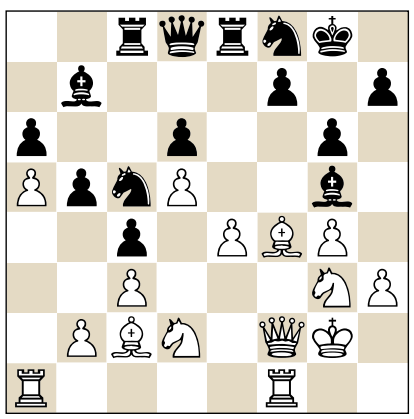
25...♖c8 26.♔g2 ♘f8 27.♖f1 ♗g5



28.f4!

This break comes at the perfect time. Black is really regretting her move 26...♘f8 now. But now that she had actually already played it, 27...g5 instead of 27...♗g5 was called for.

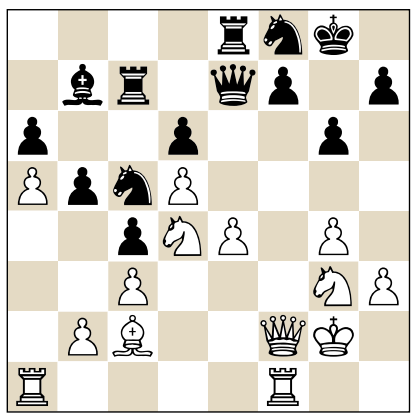
28...exf4 29.♗xf4



29...♖c7

My only thought would be how to get the knight back to d7 and e5, so from this point of view I would prefer protecting the f7-pawn differently: 29...♗xf4 30.♕xf4 ♕e7 31.♘f3 ♘fd7, with unclear play. In fact, now I feel bad for the b7-bishop, so the rook should move from c8 anyway.

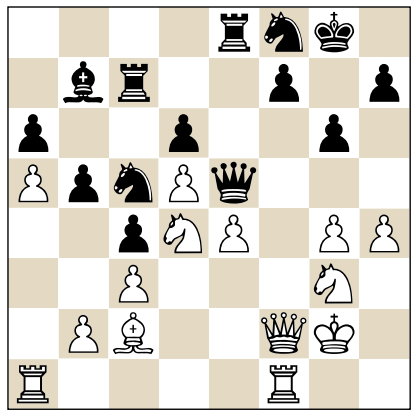
30.♗xg5 ♕xg5 31.♘f3 ♕e7 32.♘d4



32...♕e5?!

This is where the knight belongs, not the queen. Better was 32...♘fd7 33.♘df5 gxf5 34.♘xf5 ♕f6, and although White has compensation thanks to the knight on f5 and the fact that Black is very uncoordinated, Black has her own fair share of chances.

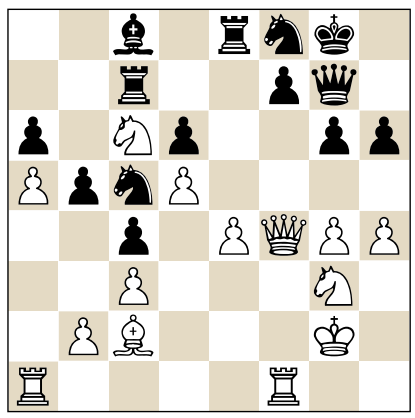
33.h4



33...h6? Let me repeat myself once again: Black still had to regroup: 33...♖ce7! 34.g5 ♘fd7 35.♕d2 ♕g7!, and it's still unclear! In fact, the move ...♕e5 wasn't so bad. Now the rooks are nicely doubled.

34.♕d2 ♗c8 35.♘c6 ♕g7 36.♕f4

Now we see why I kept nagging about the knight being misplaced on f8: the d6-pawn is exposed.



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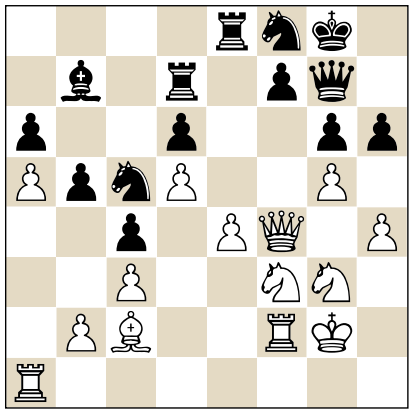
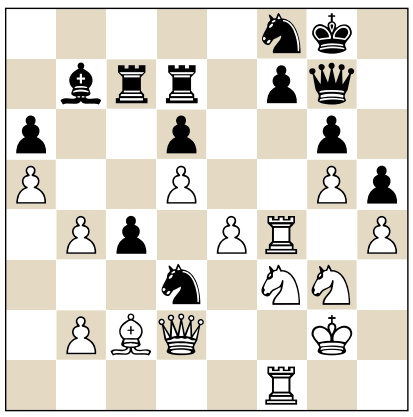
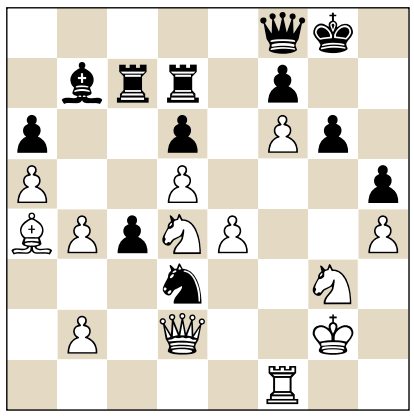
36...♖d7
Instead, 36...♘fe6!? and some funky stuff could have been tried, but this is unearthly magic. I can imagine that Judit Polgar would have seen this resource at her peak: 37.dxe6 (37.♕xd6 ♘b7! 38.♕a3 ♘ec5) 37...♘xe6 38.♕xd6 ♖d7 39.♕b8 ♖d2+ 40.♖f2 ♖xf2+ 41.♔xf2 ♕f6+, and Black is alive.
37.♖f2 ♗b7 38.♘d4 ♖e5 39.♘f3 ♖e8 40.g5!
Obviously, Maria doesn't repeat moves. Now she creates a weakness on h5 and Natalia will have to start paying attention to possible sacrifices.



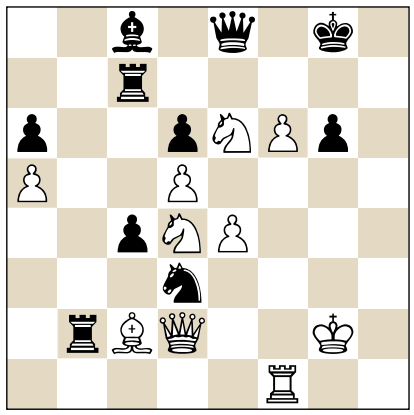
40...h5 41.♘d4 ♕e5 42.♕d2 ♖c7 43.♖af1 ♖ee7 44.♖f6 ♖ed7 45.♖6f4
45.♘df5! was already possible, but apparently Maria was in no hurry. After 45...gxf5 46.♖1xf5 ♕e7 47.♖h6 is devastating.
45...b4 Desperation.
46.♘f3 ♕g7 47.cxb4 ♘d3



48.♖f6
48.♗xd3!? is more prosaic: 48...cxd3 49.♘e1 and White wins.
48...♘h7 49.♘d4!? ♘xf6 50.gxf6 ♕f8 51.♗a4



51...♘e5 51...♖d8 was also losing, but it had to be played anyway: 52.♘xh5! ♖b8 (52...gxh5 simply loses to 53.♖f5, and it will just be mate) 53.♘g7!? ♗c8 54.h5 ♖xb4 55.♗c2 ♖xb2 56.hxg6 fxg6 57.♘ge6 ♕e8



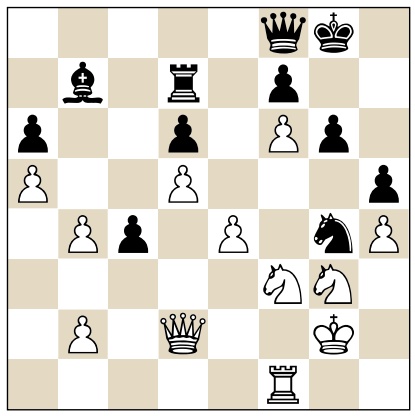
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

58.♖h1!. Black will eventually be mated here; the material balance is no longer important.

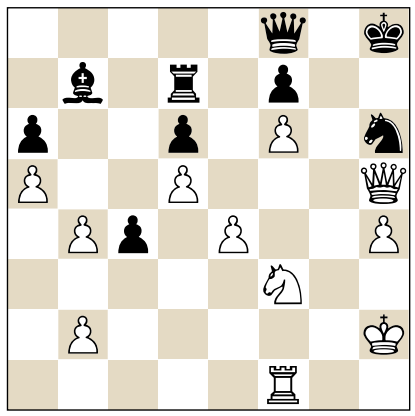
ETERI KUBLASHVILI

A radiant Maria Muzychuk with the World Champion's crown.

52.♗xd7 ♖xd7 Now White keeps her attack and is a pawn up to boot. The rest is easy. **53.♘f3 ♘g4**



54.♘xh5! Sooner or later this was bound to happen. **54...gxh5 55.♕g5+ ♔h8 56.♕xh5+ ♘h6 57.♔h2!** The silent killer. ♖g1-g7 cannot be stopped.



57...♕g8 58.♖g1 Black resigned. ■

Murray Chandler

PEAK RATING: 2605 (July 1991)
DATE OF BIRTH: April 4, 1960
PLACE OF BIRTH: Wellington, New Zealand
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Auckland, New Zealand

What is your favourite colour?
White, I'm not Adorjan.

What kind of food makes you happy?
An exotic breakfast buffet somewhere in Asia.

And what drink?
Pinot Noir from Central Otago, NZ.

Who is your favourite author?
Bill Bryson, the travel writer.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
I've read *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* a dozen times.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Bodyguard (love story, great soundtrack).

What is your favourite TV series?
Top Gear.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Bill Murray (*Groundhog Day*, *Lost in Translation*…).

And a favourite actress?
Julia Roberts.

What music do you like to listen to?
Anything from Pink Floyd to Christina Perri.

Do you have a favourite painter?
The Scottish bloke who painted my brother's house is good fun.

What was your best result ever?
9/11 at the Dubai Olympiad, helping England win silver medals.

What was the best game you ever played?
Beating Kortchnoi in 23 moves (Isle of Man 2004) was memorable, because he didn't even tell me off afterwards. ▶

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Mikhail Tal. Anyone of my generation will understand.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
I lugged those Informators all over the world. How times change.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Impossible to choose. I was privileged to watch Kasparov & Karpov at their peak.

What is the best chess country in the world?
England! Due to the variety of colourful characters, past & present.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Chess players are superb travel companions, fun and inquisitive.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Our single-minded will to win is admirable. It could occasionally be toned down in real life.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
There are many traits I admire.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Those who seek to control others by force.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Just about anyone – it's not easy being me ☺.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Can't say, but they are all very cute.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
The deal of a lifetime comes along once a month.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Slav with …a6 could be useful.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
Queenstown, New Zealand.

What is your greatest fear?
Being invited to play in Hastings again.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
Nothing. It would be interesting to start from scratch.

How do you relax?
Movies.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Zero tolerance and drug testing are equally daft.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
I only look one year ahead.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Yes, some thought processes can be helpful.

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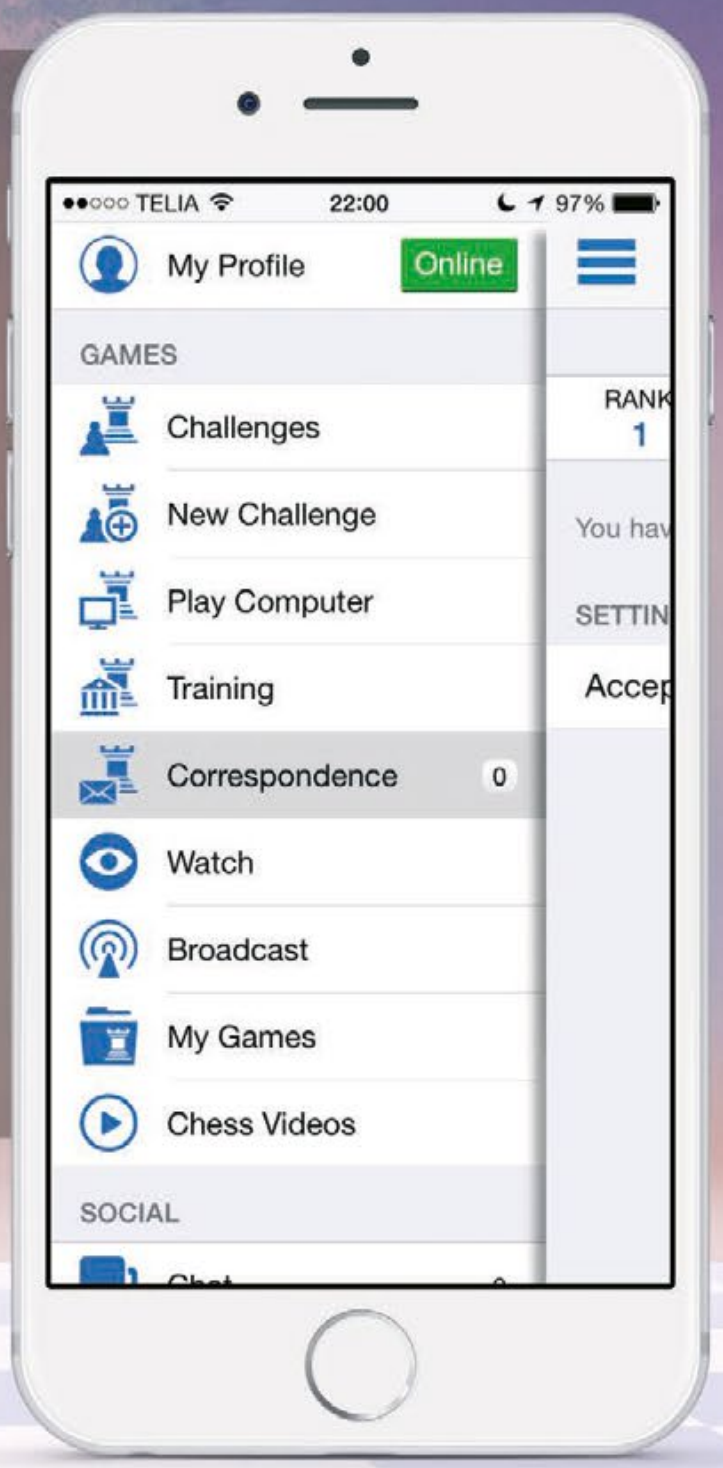

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